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This Architect Used Every Brilliant Trick He Knows to Pack His Own Kitchen with Storage

Baltimore-based Everett Schram transformed a tiny and poorly-designed kitchen into a dream space for his family.

BY TINA CHADHA | PUBLISHED: SEP 23, 2024

Architect Everett Schram's kitchen is a masterclass in efficient design. When giving the modest 169 square foot space a gut renovation, the architect added about 50 percent more countertop and 60 percent more cabinet space then had been there before—without moving a single wall. "Just by rearranging the space, it feels double its original size," he says.

It helps that Schram, his wife, and 10-year-old daughter lived in the three bedroom Baltimore home before renovating and understood exactly how they wanted to use the space. As a classical architect—his firm **J. E. Schram Architect** specializes in reviving old homes—Schram's goal was to honor the history and style of the 1928 Colonial Revival while modernizing it for his young family. "I wanted it to be fun and unique and yet still timeless," he says. Plus, the family are enthusiastic cooks who create plant-based meals from scratch nightly and need ample counter space and storage.

To start, Schram identified the problem areas and tweaked the layout: the location of the refrigerator, originally where the range is, needed to move to open up the space for food prep surfaces and cabinets. Next, the designer knew he wanted a wall of floor to ceiling cabinets to house (and hide!) all the small appliances that can easily create clutter. This paneled wall informed where the fridge would go. Schram calls the custom millwork, the largest line item on the budget, the most vital part of the renovation. "Every run of cabinets in there is one entire cabinet, so there's no joints," he explains. "You're not losing three inches between every door. In a small kitchen, you have to get every inch out of the space."

As for the look, Schram took some risks on color and went with the sophisticated Black Blue by Farrow and Ball. “That's often not something most clients are comfortable doing,” he says. “I want to show people you don’t have to be scared of dark colors.” As far as his favorite design element: that would be the custom-made Zellige Subway tile. “My wife wanted subway tiles because we live in a 1920s house,” he says. “But I didn't want to use subway tiles because I use it in so many of my clients' houses. I do a lot of this homes of this era.”

Luckily, **Tiles of Ezra** agreed to custom make a three by six brick in the Moroccan glaze—a win-win for both. “I love that it's a one-off,” says Schram. “And I love that both my wife and I got what we were separately wanting.”

Before the Transformation

COURTESY OF EVERETT SCHRAM

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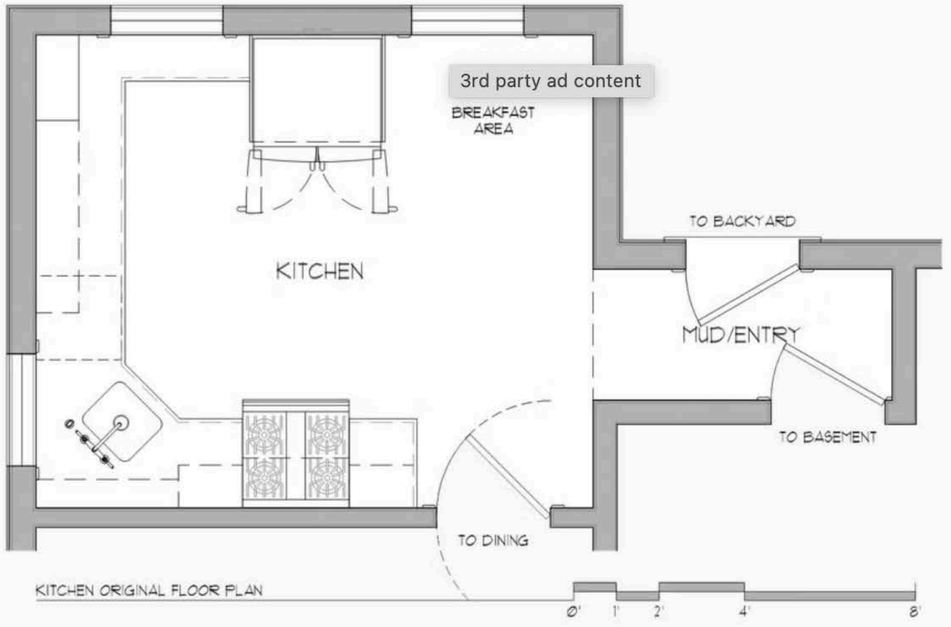
The original kitchen was a builder-grade renovation done around 2006 in a dark cherry with a brown granite countertop. “We had painted all of the cabinets and changed the hardware to make it more tolerable until we could afford to do the full reboot,” says Schram.

The Original Floorplan



COURTESY OF EVERETT SCHRAM

In the old layout, there was a breakfast table to the right of the refrigerator and under the window on the left was a radiator. “So there was no cabinetry on that entire wall, and it was just really badly laid out in general,” says Schram.

The Sink and Stove Areas

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A major issue with the old layout was that the sink was in the corner under the window, “which was terrible to actually use,” says Schram. Since it’s unconventional to face a sink to a wall rather than looking out a window the designer created a little moment around the sink by framing it with a gorgeous Urban Electric Co. light. Funny thing: it actually improved the view. “When you stood at the sink and looked out the window all you could really see is the trunk of a magnolia tree,” explains the expert. From the new position you now see branches, blooms and a view of the garden. The kitchen now feels expansive and is filled with light.

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Another savvy design move was having BlueStar custom-enamel the range to match the cabinetry. “This helps not break up the lines of the small kitchen, further enlarging the feel of the space,” says Schram.

Cabinets, **Crown Point**; Zellige Tile, **Tiles of Ezra**; Hanging Shelves, **Palmer Industries**; Decorative Lighting, **The Urban Electric Co.**; Decorative Towel Hardware, **Urban Archaeology** & **deVOL**. Range, **BlueStar Cooking**; Plastered Hood by Kelly Walker of **Artstar Custom Paintworks**

Storage Solutions

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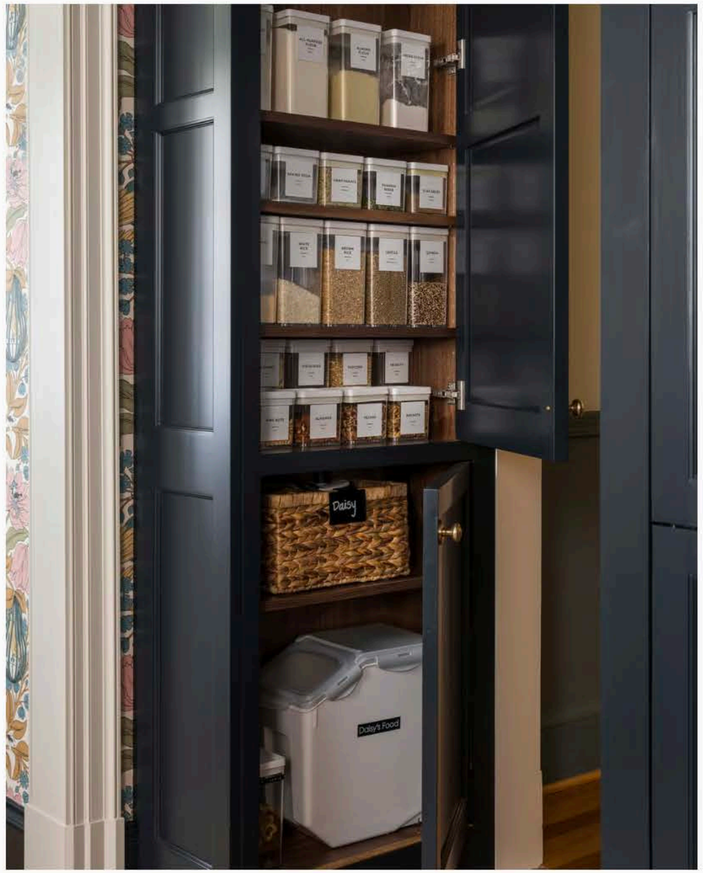
The efficient kitchen is stocked with pullout cabinets and drawers for spices, pots and pans, cleaning supplies and trash. Schram worked with professional organizer, Lesley Drane of Clean Lines Organizing and Design to get everything in order.

“All those baskets, they actually house appliances,” says Schram. This includes items like the popcorn maker, food processors, coffee maker that all get hidden away once the pocket back doors close.

Knobs and Pulls; **Classic Brass.**



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By getting rid of the swinging door between the kitchen and the dining room Schram was able to squeeze in a 10 inch deep pantry. Shallow pantries are ideal, “otherwise you just lose stuff in the back of the cabinet.” says the expert. The knife drawer was is another made-to-fit touch. “I wanted to show how much you can do with a small space with special/custom finishes and details,” says Schram.

General Contractor: Case Builders.