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101 IDEAS

Home & Garden Television
A continuing compendium of tips and tricks from Home & Garden Television:
Environmentally savvy furniture tips:

Shop local

Reusing furniture that already exists is the best and kindest choice for the environment. If you're in the market for new furniture, first ask yourself if anything in your home can be repurposed or found at a local flea market, thrift store or antique shop.

Hunt for furniture online

Buying or finding used furniture saves big on budget. Two of the best places online to check are Craigslist.org and Freecycle.org. These communities offer free, local classified ads for everything from sofas to dining tables. While items listed on Craigslist often have a price attached, furniture listed on Freecycle has one requirement: It must be given away free.

Can't reuse? Buy responsibly

"If you can't find a piece you love in the used marketplace, the next-best thing to do is to buy something made from sustainable materials," says Zem Joaquin, green blogger at Ecofabulous.com. How can you tell if furniture is environmentally friendly? Look for these certifications:

- Greenguard certification Furniture has been tested

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The former kitchen, right, had a configuration that flowed nicely to the rest of the home but was dated with large soffits, old windows, insufficient lighting with a hideous light box over the island, small counter tiles and really old vinyl floors. The renovated kitchen, above, features new Decora Cabinetry with many custom modifications such as two bread boards used for additional work counters by the librarian-baker and her husband. Also designed was not one but two tall pantry storage units all with roll-out trays to add efficiency and convenience to the kitchen. Recessed lighting was added and the bay window was expanded to offer more of the view.



Renovation 16 years in making

Story and photos courtesy of Robin Denker • Special to The Star

A creative, well-read couple tackles a kitchen remodel, and all of the bumps and bruises that come with it.

What do you get when you cross a librarian and a kitchen designer? Answer, an extremely well researched, well thought out and expertly designed kitchen.

A lovely Thousand Oaks couple began contemplating their kitchen remodel the day they set eyes on their new home; which was when they purchased it in 1992. Can you imagine how many design books and decorating magazines have passed through this librarian's hands from then until now?

I couldn't help but to relate to their story and remember back to 1996 when I had purchased a home in Agoura Hills which had awful dated wallpaper with tiny little ducks all over it — on each and every kitchen wall. And, to make matters worse a corresponding wallpaper border ran into the family room. Don't we all have visions of changing the old to the new?

In this case, the homeowners did just that. It began last February with a routine phone call from the librarian while she was letting her fingers "do the research" on the Internet. She had spoken with a couple of contractors and cabinet people about remodeling their kitchen before hiring me.

With information at her fingertips, and I mean countless "clicks," they came into the showroom armed with a large blue notebook chock full of photos, product descriptions and plenty of questions. The couple told me they were on information overload.

They had begun the process with researching Consumer Reports magazine and of course the library's Internet data bases. With torn magazine pages of likes and dislikes as well as many articles relating to appliances and products like lighting, kitchen sinks and, of course, cabinetry

Please see **RENOVATION** on H34



Once the outdated kitchen was demolished, the real work began transforming it into a more modern space and bringing about the Thousand Oaks couple's 16-year dream.

Questions to answer before starting a remodeling project

Before starting a kitchen remodel be prepared to answer some basic questions that will help in the design plan as well as make the process go smoother.

- How long do you plan to stay in your home?
- Do you like to cook?
- Do you need more storage?
- Are you right or left handed?
- Do you need more accessible easy-to-reach space?
- Do you need more countertop space / work

space?

What didn't you like about your old kitchen? What would be the most important change to do in your new kitchen?

Are you realistic about how long the remodeling process may take and the costs involved?

Are you aware of California Title 24 lighting regulations and how we can design with it?

Are you aware of permits pertaining to remodeling?

— Robin Decker

What I didn't know was that this librarian would research everything about the design plan. She asked amazing questions. Inquiring minds do want to know ...



Photos courtesy Robin Denker

Also designed was not one but two tall pantry storage units with roll-out trays to ease the aching back. A beautiful black base cabinet with an antique furniture look is sandwiched between the two storage units, and microwave center to provide a unique look and keep the kitchen interesting.

RENOVATION

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we had our first meeting.

It was then my job to help them narrow down and ascertain what they truly wanted.

I began by asking a number of straight forward design questions, including how long do you plan to stay in your home; do you like to cook; are you right or left handed; what would be the most important change to do in your new kitchen; are you realistic about how long the remodeling process may take and the costs involved; are you aware of California Title 24 lighting regulations and how we can design with it; are you aware of permits pertaining to remodeling, etc.

Just imagine the possibilities they had been thinking of for 16 years. The next meeting was at their home.

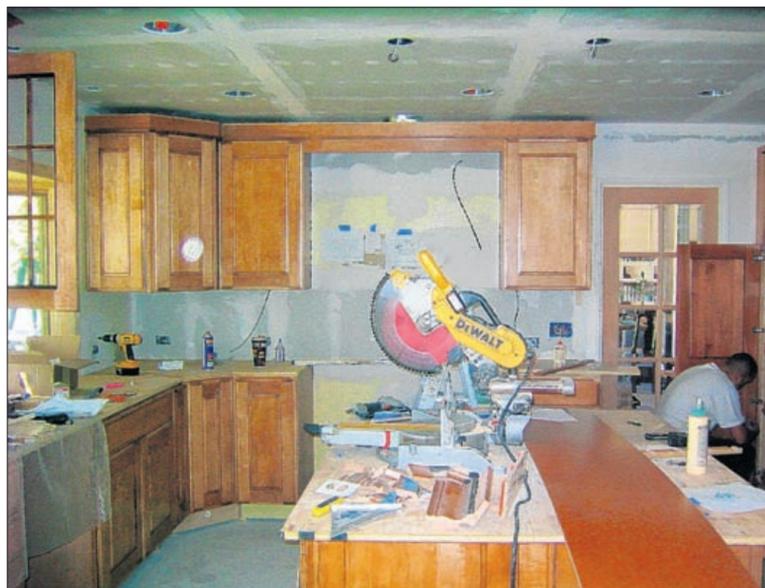
When I walked up to the door I knew exactly why they had fallen in love with it. You could see through the front window to their backyard which had 180 degree views of the Conejo Valley — and breathtaking views they are. What I hadn't expected was breakfast, and for this former food writer, it was a nice surprise. I couldn't believe that she had treated me to some of her special home-made oatmeal with fruit and cinnamon. Yummy!

After a delightful breakfast and with tape measure, graph paper and pencil in hand, I began to measure and sketch their kitchen.

The current kitchen configuration flowed nicely to the rest of the home. It was simply very dated; with large soffits, old windows, insufficient lighting with that hideous old light box over the island (that many of us had at one time or another), small counter tiles and really old vinyl floors. I knew this was a project I could tackle with ease and what fun it would be, especially if delicious treats were still offered.

I went back to my showroom and began to sketch, by hand at first, and then draft on a CAD-based program on the computer. This enabled me to show the couple several versions of what their new kitchen would look like. They were offered choices of cabinetry colors and tricked out their design by using two colors of cabinetry — and through the world of computer technology, they were able to see it in 3D. "Whalaa," I said, no dust for the remodel on this computer. If it only were as easy as that.

Armed with an outline and a cost spreadsheet, I provided an unlimited "ask the professional lifeline questions." They had seriously given much thought to whether they would hire a contractor or to take on the job themselves in order to save money, as well as have a closer hand in the project. The couple decided to act as their own general contractor. It worked well for them, and they said it was



Unlike the CAD program used to create the kitchen design, there was much dust as the cabinets, counters and appliances were being installed, above, A focal point was created with a tile and stone backsplash, below, behind the new 48-inch stainless steel range.



an educational experience that they benefited from it financially.

To do-it-yourselfer's, the most important thing when doing a major project is to do the research and choose trades people based on experience, not the lowest bids.

What I didn't know was that this librarian would research everything about the design plan. She asked amazing questions. Inquiring minds do want to know. They wanted to know about the BTUs put out by the burners;

about the CFMs that the hood had; about the temperature of the hot water for the Insta-Hot; about the newer non-skid flooring tile choices; the ease of cleaning the new granite for their counters and the durability of porcelain tile flooring, etc. I told her I would get the technical answers for them and if I didn't know the answer I would get it from the manufacturers. And get the answers I did. All of their concerns were addressed.

The kitchen renovation would provide for

beautiful new maple cabinetry in a medium honey-tone with a glaze. But equally as important as the look, the design plan provided them with more storage by removing their existing soffit and making the new cabinets taller.

Since the kitchen has a magnificent view of the Conejo Valley the window over the kitchen sink to a bay window was expanded to allow for more natural sunlight and to bring in the view.

Also addressed was California's Title 24 lighting code with the addition of recessed 6-inch cans of fluorescent lights over the perimeter as well as the addition of several low-voltage lights for the "wow" factor. And "wow" it is. Everything is on Lutron dimmers and controlled by one main panel; the electrician was a genius. However, one might need an instruction manual to work it.

The kitchen features new Decora Cabinetry with many custom modifications such as two bread boards; not used for cutting but for an additional work counters for this librarian-baker. Also designed was not one but two tall pantry storage units all with roll-out trays to ease the aching back. A beautiful black base cabinet with an antique furniture look is sandwiched between the two storage units, and microwave center to provide a unique look and keep their kitchen interesting.

The detailed crown mouldings were topped off with a decorative black inset to create cohesiveness and continue the interest around the room.

A focal point was created with a tile and stone backsplash behind the new 48-inch stainless steel range which was a particular wish of her husband who also enjoys cooking.

My personal goal for the space was to build confidence for the clients with the design and the products they ultimately selected. The design plan gave them a kitchen road map showing the best route for their remodel.

It's not that one way is right but there are many ways that are right. Finding what works for this family was my goal.

I think the couple discovered that this was about construction and not brain surgery — things do go wrong; but thankfully, with patience and the right people trying to achieve the same goal of satisfaction, it worked out well. At the end of it, the couple said it wasn't too difficult.

I think we pulled it together with this efficient, beautiful and functional new kitchen; it reflects the traditional charm of this couple with an upbeat, up-to-date design.

(Robin Denker is a former food writer, interior designer and owner of Kitchens by Design in Westlake Village. She can be reached at 818-991-1020. On the Web, visit <http://www.kitchensofwestlake.com>)

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101 IDEAS

Continued from H1

and approved as a low-emitting product, which means better indoor air quality.

- MBDC Cradle 2 Cradle certification

Furniture has been responsibly and sustainably designed from its creation until its rebirth as another product

- Forest stewardship council-certified wood

"Any product with this label has

been produced in a sustainable fashion," Joaquin says. "Trees were cut in a responsible manner, with little environmental impact."

Choose renewable resources

Eco-friendly furniture materials to look for include:

- Bamboo
- Cork
- Beech wood
- Reclaimed lumber and recycled wood scraps
- Recycled products from plastics and paper

Sustainable fibers like hemp, wool and jute

- Bent plywood or molded ply
- Corrugated cardboard
- Stainless steel

- Kirei board (made from reclaimed sorghum stalk fibers)
- Coconut palm trees

Earth-friendly finishes

Skip the toxins that accompany a new paint smell and refinish your furniture finds with environmentally friendly stains or paints. The toxic smell comes from VOCs (volatile

organic compounds) emitted not just from paints and lacquers, but also paint strippers, cleaning supplies, building materials and furnishings, according to the Environmental Protection Agency. Instead, beautify your already green furniture with these eco-friendly products:

- Bioshield natural paints and wood stains

Made from natural raw materials like citrus-peel extracts, natural pigments and seed oils in a variety of soothing, earthlike colors

- Dunn-Edwards paints
- Earth-friendly paint made in the Southwest; performs well in hot and dry climates

- The Real Milk Paint Co.
- Non-toxic paint made with milk protein, lime, clay and earth pigments that lets you control how thick or thin it is by adding water — perfect for whitewashing furniture

(For thousands of other ideas visit www.hgtv.com. Distributed by Scripps Howard News Service.)