



SMALL KITCHEN BIG IMPACT

A small Calgary condo kitchen gets a style boost with cost-effective design

By Cindy McGlynn • Photography by Bookstrucker

When a first-time home buyer in Calgary needed help creating a bright airy feel in her brand new condo in the city's trendy Aspen district—and one that wouldn't break the bank—designer Alykhan Velji was happy to take the call.

“She’s a younger client, and she wanted it to be bright and fun,” says Velji, principal of Alykhan Velji

Designs. The room layout was pre-determined, so Velji’s task was to help the client choose finishes, decor and furnishings. She wanted a fresh, energetic-feeling space, but also had an eye on the possibility of resale down the road. So something with a classic feel and budget appeal was the order of the day.

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Timeless and fun

How did the designer do it? By choosing a neutral palette with pops of colour for expression, affordable but beautiful finishes and furnishings, and some special touches.

Starting in the kitchen. “No matter where you’re sitting, you’re going to see that kitchen space,” says Velji, “so it needs to be timeless. We wanted the shell to be very neutral. When you go with grey tones like we did, it can feel cold, so we brightened the whole space up with whites and splashes of colour.”

For storage, Velji chose timeless, painted flat panel cabinets. “With open concept, the last thing you want is super dark cabinetry with dark walls. So lighter cabinetry is important. Velji kept the same flooring throughout the whole space; a laminate product that mimics wood. Stable, affordable and functional, Velji puts it simply: “It’s amazing.”

Natural light

The kitchen backsplash is a very simple, long subway tile. “When you take a familiar element like a subway tile, but use it differently—we stacked it—it feels very modern.” The countertops are Caesarstone.

The island is a natural focal point in the room, but the designer didn’t want to over-emphasize it. “It’s a large island,” he says, “and we didn’t want it to feel imposing in the space. So we kept the pendant lighting simple and not too large.”

In fact, the room has terrific natural light, which Velji accented with a variety of lighting including floor lamps, table lamps and recessed ceiling lighting. **-H**

Colour and pattern brighten the room and let the homeowner's personality shine through.

A playful mix

“We also put a bar cart at the far side of the island,” he says. It’s a hot trend that Velji loves. “It’s just so simple. Just put some glasses down to serve your guests. It’s just a perfect little space to do that.”

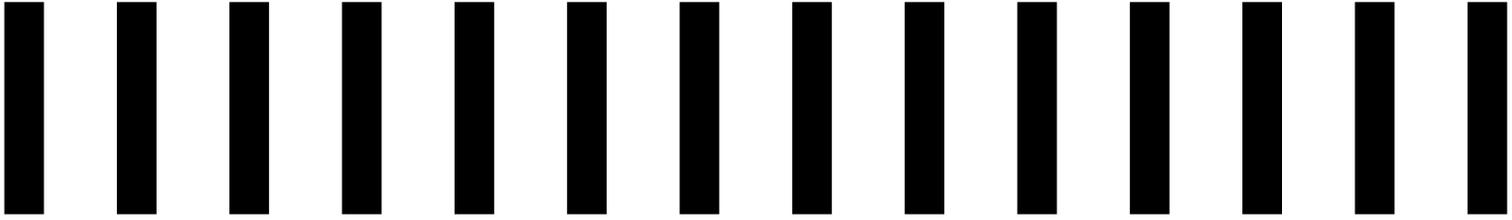
The living area adjacent to the kitchen was the space to introduce more colour and pattern, to brighten up the rooms and let the homeowner’s personality shine through.

It’s an interesting, and delightful mix. Velji agrees. “We mixed a lot of different design elements. The table is mid-century. The sofa is IKEA—it’s a pull out! It was a very budget-conscious project and it all came together really well.” Something that Velji is very proud of.

“For us it’s always about accessible design. Of course, we do lots of luxury projects, too. But I feel like design should be for everyone.” **-H**



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Know yourself

Functionality and organization are two main considerations in any reno, says Higgins. You should also think about details, such as lighting, flooring, sinks and storage ahead of time. “You can make a kitchen beautiful,” Higgins says, but if it doesn’t meet your needs then it’s just a lovely, useless space.”

Hire a designer

It’s not that you can’t pull off a reno without design input—it’s that you probably shouldn’t. According to Alykhan Velji of Alykhan Velji Designs in Calgary, there are a lot of variables in kitchen design, many of them unforeseen until late in the renovation process. “Having someone with expertise to help determine the best layout for your kitchen ensures that the space is crafted for your needs and style from the start.” What’s more, they can even help a botched remodel. “It’s never too late to bring in a designer. They can take a space that may seem unfixable and reinvent it,” he says. (See Alykhan Velji’s kitchen designs in “Small Kitchen, Big Impact” on pg 25 for a great example of a post-build design project that transformed a simple, open concept condo-kitchen and great room into a high-impact living space.)

Budget Accordingly

Let’s face it: We all want the bells, the whistles and the shiny things. Unfortunately, they often come at gasp-inducing costs. To avoid overspending, create a list of your must-haves, from appliances and cabinets to faucets and flooring, and source prices for each. “Add these to your budget first and then decide if the frilly things are worth investing in,” says Velji.

Use statement pieces

Whether it’s an island made from reclaimed wood, a varnished concrete floor or a mixed metal faucet, make an effort to incorporate at least one unexpected piece of design in your space. “Adding pieces that differ from the general design makes a statement, and they also help transition spaces throughout your home,” says Higgins. “Having a dose of eclectic design in each room just makes a room more interesting.” **-H**





HOT KITCHEN TRENDS

Thinking of taking on a kitchen reno? Follow these steps for a seamless overhaul

By Liz Bruckner

Designs by Alykhan Velji Designs
Photography by Bookstrucker

There's a reason every great party ends up in the kitchen. It's quite literally the life force of the home. Heck, that's where you stash the food, right? But beyond that, the kitchen is also an integral expression point in your home because so much living happens there. "It's where cooking, socializing, homework and a host of other events occur," says Geri Higgins, president and CEO of Portfolio Kitchen & Home in Kansas City. To design a great kitchen, Higgins says creating the right aesthetic from the start is key. Here's how:
