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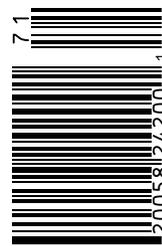
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HOMEMADE HOSPITALITY

Interior designer creates a kitchen in her own home that's perfect for entertaining

BY SUSAN SEMENAK
PHOTOGRAPHY: STEPHANI BUCHMAN
STYLING: DVIRA OVADIA

THERE WAS OFTEN a large and aromatic pot of Egyptian stew or Moroccan tagine simmering on the stove when Dvira Ovadia was growing up. Her family liked to cook and to eat, and the kitchen was the heart of the house.

Once Dvira, an interior designer and founder of Dvira Interiors, and her husband bought their home in Allenby, they began drawing up renovation plans. And top on the designer's list was a large and welcoming kitchen – but one with a contemporary sensibility.

The couple enlarged the house and opened up the main floor into a rectangle, setting an 18-by-13-foot open kitchen right in the middle, nestled between the dining room at the front and family room and study at the rear. It was to be the showpiece of the house, and Dvira wanted it to be stylish, original and elegant. ☞

To create a layered look, Dvira relied on a variety of embellishments. For example, the kitchen features no fewer than six kinds of hardware, including flat bronze pulls and agate knobs from Lee Valley Hardware.

“My dream was a modern kitchen that didn’t look like everyone else’s. I wanted to give it finishing touches that are eclectic and worldly,” says Dvira, who grew up in Brussels, where even the most modern homes she visited always seemed to retain a sliver of Old-World history.

The layered look of her own kitchen, which features sumptuous details against a spare backdrop, is a trademark that runs through all of her design work, imbuing her contemporary spaces with personality.



In her home, Dvira began by installing white no-profile wood cabinetry along the perimeter. Though the kitchen needed to be functional and well-organized enough to accommodate a passionate everyday cook (herself) and an enthusiastic weekend cook (her husband), Dvira still wanted it to feel glamorous. So she dispensed with traditional upper cabinets and replaced them with units that, with their decorative agate knobs and black edging, look more like wardrobes than kitchen cupboards. When they are open, though, they are the height of efficiency, the doors swinging open and then retracting right into the cabinet for easy access to tea-pots and small appliances.

For drama, Dvira painted the cabinets in the 11-foot-long island jet black and added custom-made antiqued brass frames to each of the doors and to the gables. She lifted the two narrow ends onto slender legs that lend the appearance of a dresser even though there is enough space in the island to house a dishwasher, a bar fridge and a speed oven. Then she topped the island with lightly veined white Statuario marble, its edges heavily detailed.



The 11-foot-long island can seat as many as seven people when Dvira entertains. “We cook here, we eat here and when we entertain I put out a big spread of food and everybody gathers here,” she says. Gas stove: Wolf; panelled dishwasher and fridge, speed oven and bar fridge: Miele.

“For everyone who walks in, it’s something to marvel at.”

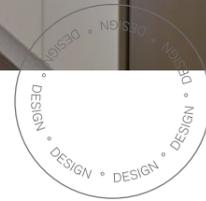


Dvira has a flair for original lighting ideas. Over the island, she hung a pair of chandeliers from Restoration Hardware that are made of wooden beads painted white and distressed. Also from Restoration Hardware: a set of vertical wall sconces made of antiqued brass and glass. For a lower-profile effect, she chose flat LED wall lamps from Royal Lighting for the opposite wall.



With all the black and white, it seemed to Dvira that another touch of “pretty” was called for. So she hung a pair of beaded chandeliers from Restoration Hardware above the island. They cast romantic shadows when lit, she says.

It’s no surprise that Dvira eschewed a conventional backsplash. Instead of tile, she opted for an original flourish behind the 36-inch Wolf stove: a smoky, vintage-look pane of mirror.



The kitchen is 18 feet by 13 feet and takes up the middle third of the home’s main floor. It is open to a casual dining room that is positioned at the front of the house and to a family room at the rear. “It all looks quite glamorous, but it’s very practical,” Dvira says.

Of all the kitchen’s dramatic flourishes, the one that Dvira loves best is the double door leading to the mudroom. It’s a massive, 300-year-old set of blue-painted wood and wrought-iron doors from Egypt that she and her husband found at The Door Store, which specializes in architectural salvage from around the world.

“For everyone who walks in, it’s something to marvel at,” Dvira says. “For me, it’s a bit of nostalgia, a nod to my Egyptian roots.”



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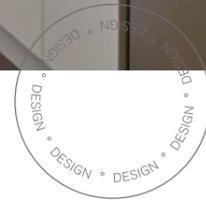


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