

THIS PHOTO:
Rubbed-nickel
reproduction pulls
break up the sea of
white cabinets while
marble counters
define the perimeter.

OPPOSITE: Thanks
to open cabinets, the
sweep of mosaic tile
shines through from
countertop to ceiling.



Open-Minded Design

Historic minimalism. Talk about an oxymoron! But that was the look Cecelia and George Don sought for the kitchen of their century-old Portland, Oregon, home. Getting the desired look mandated undoing a poorly designed previous renovation and essentially starting from scratch. "It was a 1970s kitchen, dark and uninviting," Cecelia says. "You walked in and banged right into the peninsula."

Formerly a kitchen designer and now a tile showroom manager, Cecelia had ideas for improving the space but admits a home on the historic register was foreign territory to a





THIS PHOTO: The red-painted island features a handy prep sink and a moisture-resistant teak top.

OPPOSITE LEFT: Easy-to-clean mosaic tiles cover the walls, while porcelain tile replaced the original but unsalvageable wood floor.

OPPOSITE RIGHT: Similar to the wall shelves, the island mixes fancy trims with open storage.

devotee of the modern aesthetic. "I like clean lines, so it was hard for me to put in embellishments like curlicues and gingerbread," she says. "I just didn't want it to look cutesy." The goal was a cozy space with the subtle sophistication befitting a grand home.

A quiet color scheme is the backdrop for the era-respectful minimalist look. Elegant surface materials, such as porcelain floor tiles and marble countertops, enhance the effect, and the owner covered the walls with mosaic tiles to counterbalance the decorative brackets on the hood and open shelves. Trading the traffic-blocking peninsula for an island opened up the space, and forgoing upper cabinetry—"I'm a big advocate of not littering the walls with cabinets," says the owner—further visually enlarged the small cooking area.

Instead of cabinets, open wall shelves with lacy scrollwork brackets keep dishes, glasses, and other kitchen necessities within reach. "People might worry that open shelves won't be

easy to live with, but they really are," Cecelia says. "Most of the clutter is below in the cabinetry—you just can't see it!"

The furniture-style island is topped with teak and echoes the intricate trim and open storage of the wall shelves, but with a twist: a rich red paint treatment. A brick fireplace just off the kitchen inspired the striking color. Rather than old-style fixtures, the island and window sink both feature modern pullout faucets, and the pulls are brushed-nickel reproductions.

While the new island shields the L-shape cook's zone from passersby, anyone can easily access the refrigerator, microwave oven, and pantry. And the arrangement doesn't deter guests from gathering at the island while Cecelia and George prepare meals. "We don't have room for seating, but it's human to want to be where the food is prepared," Cecelia says. "That's where the action is." **DK**

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