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Old School

By Erinn Waldo
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"Don't be scared to go dark," advised designer Shane Inman, founder of the Inman Company and the creative mind behind one unique kitchen redesign. "Going dark, whether it be cabinet finish, wall paint or upholsteries, is always something that you don't see a lot of."

[View this kitchen gallery here.](#)

In this brand new, finished home, outdated materials were not the problem, but style was. "It was very traditional and not them, since they are a younger, hipper couple," explained Inman. The home's massive square footage may have left the original owners short handed on budget, forcing them to install inferior products. "That really happens often to people when they choose not to do a smaller floor plan," he added. "They get carried away with the building."

With this impressive floor plan in mind, Inman approached the homeowners with an idea that stepped out of his usual portfolio. "I thought I would love to do a mid-century modern," he said. The designer explained that he grew up with mid-century style, which he defines as the quintessential 70s look: green shag carpet, sparse furniture, dark wood and of course, laminate.

"I thought, let's go old school with laminate – the thing I spent years tearing out," he said. By incorporating the modern touches essential to a high-functioning kitchen, the style becomes mid-century modern.

The large kitchen needed a balance of color to avoid completely darkening the room, but Inman veered away from the traditional concept of one color for the perimeters and a different color for the island. The abundance of tall cabinets in the space, an abnormality for a kitchen, also came into consideration.

"The cabinets can be very overwhelming, so I wanted to bring the color up," said Inman. "And you have to have a very good balance of where you want to put the dark versus the light."

The two colors of cabinets have no system of placement other than a sense of balance. "When you look at a room like this, your eye needs to go around the perimeter just enjoying the beauty," said Inman. "Every wall has to balance itself, and I had to make sure we had enough brown versus gray cabinets on each side." The brown cabinetry is all laminate, while the gray is painted, multi-step finished wood.

Framed by both the brown and gray cabinetry, the porcelain tile backsplash helps tie the space together. The tile matches the same material on the dining room fireplace and has stainless steel, vertically installed liners that complement the vertical drawer pulls. "I did stainless steel hardware since everything has to be cohesive, and you

need just enough touch of all of the materials," said Inman.

Made of the gray wood cabinetry, the island replaces the space's formerly small piece. "Because this space is very elongated, I wanted to take advantage of that and do a very long island," he explained. "It grounds the entire space." The heavier island has storage facing the walkway of the kitchen itself, as well as some open storage. "The open storage that you see is because I wanted the cabinetry to look like furniture piece or a hutch," he described.

Over the island, five large glass pendants illuminate the space and bring in more modernity, as well as the complementing chandelier over the adjacent dining room table.

"They are very massive, and the island is massive," said Inman. "You had to have the right balance again for the pendants that hung over the island, so it wouldn't look warped." Two of the pendants have a fabric shade under the glass globe, and three have vertical lines.

"I put a lot of emphasis on how the space motivates and inspires for my clients," said Inman. "It's not about frivolously filling the space with expensive things. It's really putting thought behind it and making sure the client loves every piece."

Designing for Mid-Century Modern

Designer Shane Inman took a unique approach to this modern design. Here are some tips to design mid-century but also keep it modern.

- Select dark materials but have a balance so the room is not too heavy.
- Choose light fixtures with a sense of "funkiness" to keep with the 70s look.
- Don't be afraid to use laminate.
- Use modern touches like stainless steel hardware to round out the space.

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