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The kitchen's restrained palette and hearth-like cooking nook reflect the homeowner's love of Belgian design. The vintage glass pendants over the island originally hung in a Belgian grocery store.

The deep navy La Cornue range and navy leather banquette set the kitchen's accent color.



ELEGANCE, BELGIAN STYLE

A redesign reclaims a Kenwood kitchen's innate charms

by **Chris Lee**
photos by **Andrea Rugg**

KITCHEN AND BATH DESIGNER Kate Roos was well-acquainted with the gracious Italian Revival house just off Lake of the Isles Parkway in Minneapolis. Back in the 1990s, during her previous career as a decorative painter, Roos gave the entryways, ceilings, and walls their murals and distinctive Tuscan flourishes.

Since then, Roos trained as a kitchen and bath designer, and worked for the award-winning firm Casa Verde Design until striking out on her own in 2015. Two years ago, she returned to the lovely old house, designed in 1918 by architect A.R. Van Dyke and built by Danielson Bros, to redesign the much-remodeled kitchen for the current owners.

These homeowners, a family with two children, needed a working kitchen. The former one, says the homeowner, was fun, but not functional. "It was fun space to gather in. It was Italian, very Tuscan-looking, with lots of decorative finishes. The ceiling was blue sky and the walls were striped. There was a porch swing in the kitchen and pillars. It had a lot of frills and interest. People would walk in and say, 'Oh, I love your kitchen.'"

But she didn't like working in it. The previous homeowner had remodeled and customized the space for her more than 6-foot frame. The current petite homeowner found it uncomfortable to work at countertops that were 3 inches higher than standard, and she could reach only the bottom shelf of the upper cabinets. The antique Irish bar that took the place of an island was eye-catching, but its worn surface was difficult to clean. Likewise, the concrete countertops were weathered, pitted, and easily stained.

After living with the inconveniences for six years, she began plotting her new kitchen. She knew she wanted a working island, few upper cabinets, and a table for seating. She also chose the La Cornue range in deep navy and the same rich color for the leather-covered banquette. Rather than a heavy, utilitarian booth feel, she says, "I wanted it off the floor with more elegant legs." The banquette isn't built-in—it just slides into place beneath the windows. "It's more like a piece of furniture."

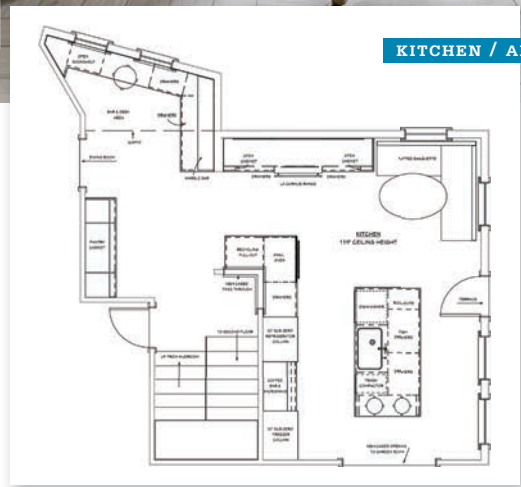


DESIGNER Kate Roos Design, LLC
CONTRACTOR Quality Home Transformations, Inc.

A sliding door conceals storage between the refrigerator and freezer.



The graceful banquette sits in a sunny corner beneath arched windows.



As the homeowner gathered inspiration for the remodel, her Pinterest boards got a workout. When she was ready to begin the design phase of the remodel, “I could show Kate almost every wall,” she says.

“Not all clients know what they want, but she definitely does,” says Roos. Her job was taking all that information and translating it into the design, as well as for the cabinetmaker, the upholsterer, the stone fabricator, and the contractor. She worked with the custom cabinetmakers to ensure that the ceruse-finished oak and the gray paint of the cabinetry were exactly right together.

Roos’s design also tweaked several spaces to make them more useable—the original butler’s pantry and its cockeyed walls, for example.

The bar on one of those walls, its amazing backsplash, brackets at an obtuse angle, and partial corbels, demanded complicated design and execution. Likewise, the marble countertops—elegant slabs with lovely warm veining—presented a particular challenge. Because the stone had been purchased a year before the job started, the material was limited and the direction of the veining on the island, the countertops, and the bar had to be carefully planned. “It was all very kind of fussy,” says Roos.

But what results! The redesigned kitchen is an elegant, light-filled space—with the style and the conveniences the homeowner wanted. Her affinity for Belgian design is evident in the kitchen’s simple elegance, restrained palette, timeless finishes, and spare-yet-comfortable

style. The nook-like cooking area, framed by a lintel of reclaimed oak, is reminiscent of a traditional hearth—another very Belgian touch.

Both designer and homeowner laud the ease of the process. “We were very organized,” says Roos. “Before we started we knew the appliances were all here, the tile was all here, everything was here. When the design decisions are made ahead it goes smoothly.”

Echoes the homeowner: “It really was a piece of cake. Kate was phenomenal and everyone was super nice. That’s why the kitchen looks great.”

CHRIS LEE is editor of *Midwest Home*.

FOR DETAILED RESOURCES, TURN TO PAGE 44.