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Bring wood into an all-white kitchen. Yes, we'll always love the white kitchen, but sometimes a little warmth goes a long way in a family space. Here, a Scandinavian-influenced design—think black accents along with a clean, neutral colour palette—is made a little more dynamic by pairing a section of whitewashed oak cabinetry along with the white. In a large kitchen such as this one, notes Vancouver designer Andrea Rodman, breaking up a bank of cabinets with the introduction of another material brings a more intimate feel to the space, along with some visual dynamism.

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GREAT KITCHENS

Modern, traditional and everything in between—these gorgeous rooms will inspire you to create your own great kitchen, one smart tip at a time.

by JULIA DILWORTH, STACEY MCLACHLAN, ROSEMARY POOLE and ANICKA QUIN





Simplify materials to enhance fine details. For this kitchen in Vancouver’s Dunbar neighbourhood, designer Sophie Burke chose monastically quiet elements to allow subtle variations in the polished Calacatta marble backsplash to shine. The walnut island was stained a darker-than-natural hue to prevent orange undertones from developing over time and to contrast with millwork painted a barely there grey (Para Paint’s Sing Time). “We wanted a colour that isn’t obviously grey but has a natural stonewashed shade to it and picks up on some of the colours in the marble,” says Burke. “It added interest without being too busy.”



Mix up materials to make tone-on-tone beautiful. The rich, warm grey palette of this Calgary kitchen was a natural fit for the homeowner, our 2016 Interior Designer of the Year, Douglas Cridland. “Douglas really loves moody spaces,” says designer Javier Martinez of Cridland Associates. “Any time he does a home of his own, he’s drawn to this colour palette—he loves what he loves.” But monotone doesn’t have to mean boring: here, mid-tone grey millwork is paired with a smooth quartz counter in the same colour range, while a dynamic fabric on the backs of the comfy custom stools adds a little pattern variation. And the upper cabinets above the sink are in another material as well—back-painted glass, in the same shade as the walls. The combination of materials keeps the space interesting, while the unifying colour palette has a calming vibe.

Clockwise from top left: Barry Calhoun, Chris Rollett, Eymeric Wrdling

Fuse an island with a table.

A cantilevered reclaimed-wood table juts out of the Carrara marble block in this White Rock, B.C., kitchen. It’s a stunning architectural feature—and one that grew out of a compromise. “I wanted a big, beautiful feature block, and the homeowner wanted a breakfast table, so we fought it over and this was the result,” laughs interior designer Adam Becker. The warm and rustic tabletop Becker brought in from Scott Landon Antiques provides space for an intimate breakfast for two, but the clever structure actually accentuates the sleek island’s clean lines in the process. Win-win.



Bring sculpture—and a little asymmetry—to the kitchen island.

When designer Stephanie Brown met with her North Vancouver clients, they chatted about that all-important question: Just how many stools does a family of three need? While the answer is obvious (four, since a spare is great), there can sometimes be a temptation to max out seating space on a large island such as this one (the counter is more than 12 feet long). Instead, Brown kept the visual clutter down with a trim number of stools and an asymmetric design that introduces a sculptural niche to the front of the island—great for the display of a few pretty pieces of pottery.



Use dark cabinetry to draw in the outdoors. “The homeowners wanted the inside and the outside of the home to be one room,” says Tina Marogna, principal of Aya Kitchens of Vancouver and the designer of this West Vancouver space. Using flat-panelled wenge cabinets in a rich rye shade, with minimal pull-tab hardware and similarly dark quartz stone for both the countertops and backsplash, allows the kitchen to recede, bringing the landscaping to the fore. Major design elements, including the red-cedar ceiling and the tile flooring, run continuously to the outside, further blurring the lines. A clever indoor-outdoor countertop on the perimeter wall makes playing bartender a breeze.

Bring back the black.

Not to dis the classic white kitchen (we'll happily admit that we're suckers for a subway tile), but it's nice to see some darker shades sneaking their way into kitchen designs, too. Black accents, deployed with care, can add depth to a space. In this Falken Reynolds kitchen (left), the cooktop area is decked out with a Raven Caesarstone countertop and matching backsplash and cabinets to add some negative space and to avoid a wall of white. When Elena Del Bucchia designed a kitchen for a bachelor banker in Calgary (bottom right), she took her cue for the palette from his black suits and created a feature wall that helps elongate a narrow layout. For Gillian Segal of Gillian Segal Design, black window and door frames (and matching Louis-chair-style bar stools, top right) give an airy space some moments of focus in the Vancouver kitchen she designed for clients. But there may be another reason to give the black accent trend a try: "It's really forgiving for less fastidious chefs," laughs Chad Falkenberg of Falken Reynolds.

Top: Ema Peter; Bottom: Lori Andrews; Opposite: Barry Calhoun





Light the room for both mood and function.

Though this space is finely detailed—gorgeous millwork, Calacatta marble backsplash—this kitchen anchors one end of a fairly informal living space in this family home in Vancouver. Designed by architect David Nicolay of Evoke International Design, it's also incredibly well lit: the long, linear fixture over the island lights the room with both uplight and downlight (or just one or the other), but there's mood-setting options here, too. A dimmable strip of lights lines the stone wall, creating a soft glow in the room for someone, say, watching a movie in the nearby lounge space; meanwhile, above the dining table, a Roll and Hill fixture adds a decorative touch.

Janis Nicolay



Pare down
and show off.

In this modern-country kitchen designer Bruce Wilkin created for (and in collaboration with) *Western Living*'s own Victoria city editor, Rosemary Poole, marble slabs were mounted on cast iron brackets above the sink to provide open-concept storage for the handful of dishes Poole and her family actually use. "The best thing about open shelves is that you always know where things are," says Wilkin. "There's no digging around—the space feels intuitive, with everything exactly where it should be."

Let the architecture be your guide.

The design process requires compromise, yet it's hard to see how that truism applies to this West Vancouver kitchen. Where are the hard choices? What's been sacrificed? There's the made-to-order appliances, the custom millwork and undoubtedly the most luxe feature of all, the wok kitchen—a stand-alone prep space that redefines the humble butler's pantry.

To understand how a kitchen like this comes to pass is to go back to 2008. That year, the homeowners began working with Kelly Deck Design on a painstaking, multi-year renovation. Two years after the project wrapped, they were all working together again, this time building an 8,500-square-foot custom home in the same neighbourhood. It would share the look and feel of the first house—that unmistakable light, transitional modernism for which the design firm is known—but it would be programmed to suit the couple and their two young children down to the smallest detail. “They wanted a home that was comfortable and worked for their family,” says lead designer Nicole Mah. “At the same time, incorporating traditional elements and staying true to the overall architecture and setting was also important.”

From the outset, Mah worked closely with Alex Glegg, of Alex Glegg Design, who designed the home itself, allowing her to

reference architectural details and exterior elements with well-considered interior details. For example, the pattern in the backsplash tile follows the diagonal lines of the coffered ceiling; the warm whites and parchment-toned paint colours contrast precisely with the black-framed doors and windows, which then contrast precisely with the limestone-clad exterior of the house.

Of course, the La Cornue range factored highly into the overall

kitchen design. Early on in the process, Mah and the homeowners attended an event at Colony Appliances, where chef Trevor Bird of Vancouver's Fable Diner prepared a meal on the bespoke French cooker. (It was there they also saw the company's built-in rotisserie oven and added it to the plans. When in Rome . . .)

The completed 500-square-foot space is as practical as it is meticulous. The countertops are durable quartz, the bar stools are

upholstered in synthetic leather and the wide-plank white oak flooring, which is hand-scraped and washed in a subtle grey, will wear gracefully over time. And the wok kitchen is where the homeowners prep small daily meals and keep their culinary lives in order with the help of custom integrated storage. The finishes here have been simplified, but the ethos matches the rest of the house. Says Mah: “There's a fresh brightness to all of it.”

Barry Calhoun



Pretty Perfect Subtle design details contribute to the elegance of this space: the angle of the tiles on the backsplash, for example, mirrors the diagonal lines of the coffered ceiling. The wok kitchen, below, is where the homeowners prep small daily meals.



STEAL THIS LOOK

Incorporate a secondary prep space. So many new kitchens, especially on the sunlight-starved West Coast, prioritize windows over upper cabinets, resulting in an open look but a loss of storage. A dedicated pantry space, be it a closet, butler's pantry or fully equipped wok kitchen like this one (left), maximizes storage and keeps spaces open and uncluttered.

Keeping the sink in the perimeter counters gives the island flexibility. “It's all about having that open layout,” says Mah. “Removing the sink allows enough room on the island for additional stools and, though you can't see them, for several electrical receptacles for laptops, et cetera. There's an ease of use.”

Reference millwork details with patterned tile. The crisscross pattern of the backsplash is a subtle, shimmering nod to the diagonal lines in the 10-foot-high coffered ceilings overhead. Says Mah: “What I love about the mosaic tile is that it adds a little bit more character and dimension but still really relates to the look and feel of the space.”

Use appliances as a focal point. “Integration is a key detail to avoid clutter and distraction,” says Mah. “These La Cornue appliances are so beautiful (above right), they function as art pieces within this quiet space.” The polished stainless accents on the range coordinate with the polished nickel hardware on the cabinet doors.

Use navy as the new neutral.

“For so long, people were using dark brown or grey,” says Aly Velji, principal of Alykhan Velji Designs. “Now it’s blue—the darker blues, the navies—that is coming on trend.” The Shaker-style cabinets in this 10-year-old kitchen in Calgary’s Altadore neighbourhood (right) were in good shape but stained a stale, light-absorbing brown. Velji painted the perimeter cabinets a crisp white and used Benjamin Moore’s Hale Navy on both the island and a built-in sideboard in the dining area. Three kinds of unlacquered brass hardware and marble subway tile with a bevelled edge keep the space from looking too casual.



Embrace some texture. To get a contemporary, casual-chic vibe in this Calgary kitchen (below), designer Rochelle Cote eschewed a matchy-matchy look and went for a mix of finishes and textures. Up top, some cabinet doors are white while others are frosted; below, walnut cabinetry grounds the space. But it’s the details that really make this space one of a kind, says Cote. “There were so many intricate elements here,” she notes—like the custom cabinets that flank the range, designed specifically to store knives and bottles of oil.



Put an indoor-outdoor kitchen in a corner. When you’re a landscape architect living on a 13,000-square-foot lot, an indoor-outdoor kitchen is pretty well essential. Jeffrey Riedl of Robert Pashuk Architecture says the pin-wheel plan of his Calgary home places the kitchen at the crux of the design: NanaWall systems meet on a corner and pull back completely, allowing indoor-outdoor access from multiple rooms. Features of a modern farmhouse—wire glass in the upper cabinets, a white octagonal tile backsplash and traditional milk-glass pendants—balance out the modern architecture. An outdoor fireplace clad in cut-face rundle rock keeps the family of four outdoors late into the season.

Clockwise from top: Joel Klassen, Tanja Malnar, Adrian Shellard/ShellardPhotography



Take inspiration from structural details. The steel I-beam that crossed the kitchen of this 1960s home in Calgary's Lake Bonavista neighbourhood couldn't be moved or flush-mounted, so Shannon Lenstra of Kon-strux Homebuilding and Renovations used it as the central design feature, incorporating rusted-then-clear-coated steel channelling into the cabinetry, range hood and island. Collaborating designer Nichola Clare continued the look with factory pendants from Restoration Hardware and faux-reclaimed cherry-red stools sourced from Xibit. The resulting industrial aesthetic gives the homeowners (plus their two young children and a rotating cast of rescue dogs) a bold, clean-lined space that can withstand serious daily use.

Keep the flight path clear.

Though the hexagon marble backsplash and coffered ceiling give this Vancouver kitchen an elegant vibe, this kitchen designed by Negar Reihani of Space Harmony was actually created with family in mind. "The kitchen is the centre of all the action," says Reihani. "So, yes, it's got some glamour, but it's also very kid-friendly." The homeowners have two high-energy kids running around and a gaggle of their friends creating a constant flow of visitors, so keeping the area around the oversized island clear and open was a priority. Reihani designed a special nook with built-in banquette seating for the kids to do their homework while the homeowners are busy in the kitchen.



Keep it casual in the seating area. The swing door, just to the left in this Calgary kitchen inevitably creates a traffic hub—and a crunch point in traditional kitchen nooks, since a nearby table and chairs inevitably get in the way. Designer Lauren Plomske of Renova Luxury Renovations worked with the homeowners to create a more workable space—ditching the table and chairs for a second island, with bar stools. The island also features a drinks fridge and a sink, making it the domain of the kids while mom or dad get the meal prepped. “The rest of the kitchen is theirs,” says Plomske.

Forego cabinet hardware. Boutique condo developments are always a great predictor of incoming design trends. For the kitchens in the forthcoming Bellevue building in West Vancouver, Linda Gallo, a senior designer with Insight Design, avoided cabinet hardware to enhance the lines of the unique double-raised shaker profile on the white oak cabinetry. Instead of pulls, the internal mechanical system by Tip-On allows lower drawers and doors to spring open with a slight nudge. The white-gold marble backsplash and quartz countertops are similarly uninterrupted. “We wanted to create something with a traditional feeling but executed in a very contemporary way,” says Gallo.



Layer in traditional details to make a modern update work. “When working with heritage homes, it’s important to lay down a solid base layer of strong architectural features—like cased openings, trim around the windows, archways—so that the renovated areas feel like they were always part of the home,” says designer Francesca Albertazzi, who worked with Jillian Harris to renovate this home for *Love It or List It Vancouver*. After opening up this formerly cramped kitchen on Vancouver’s west side, Harris and her *L/O/LIV* crew layered in a fresh palette of whites and soft greys (complete with a gorgeous marble mosaic backsplash) for a modern kitchen that cherishes its character. ///