

The island and backsplash feature Taj Mahal quartzite. Built-in cabinets provide storage and display space.

SPACES
RENOVATION

A KITCHEN OF THEIR OWN

How designer Alexa Stevenson added a warm, modern touch to a cramped Athens kitchen

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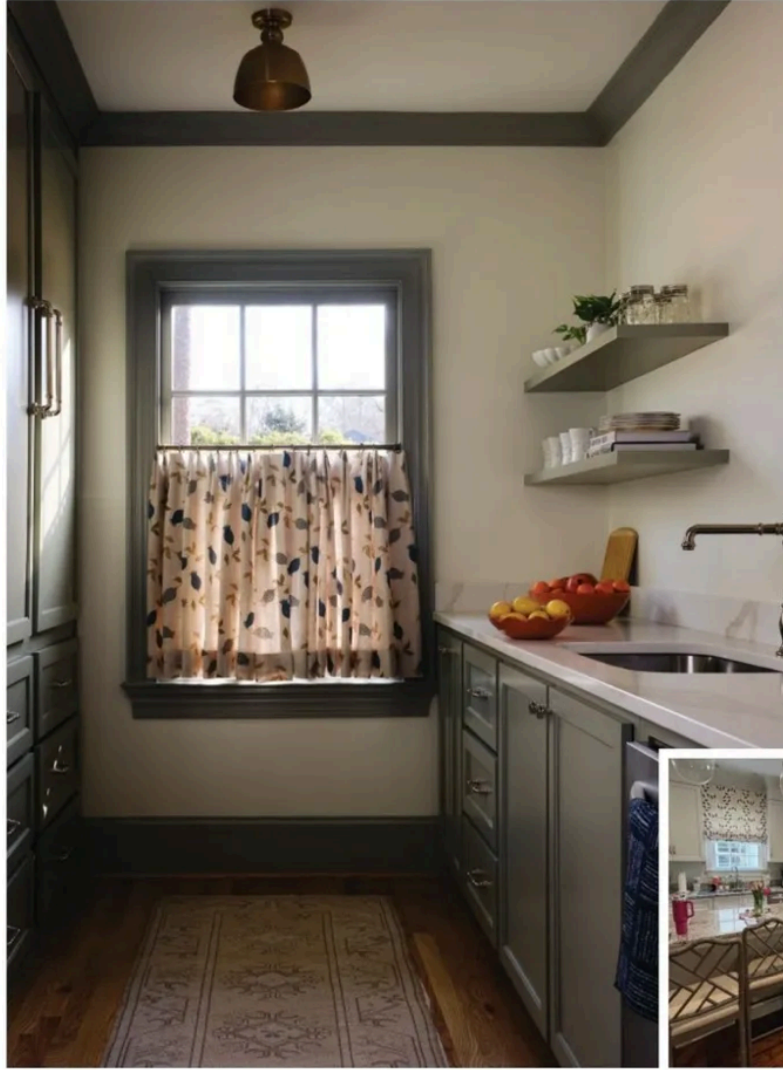
The kitchen is the heart of a home, but in Lindsey Morris's house, it was starting to feel cramped. The Athens-based lifestyle and fashion influencer behind the blog, *The Southern Elle*, shares the house with her husband and their blended family of four children, and when everyone was home at the same time, space felt tight. "There was no place to eat breakfast other than the formal dining room," says interior designer Alexa Stevenson. "They wanted a more open floor plan in the kitchen and family room."

Although the original kitchen was pretty, the designer recalls, it was closed off. "It almost felt like a forgotten part of the house, as opposed to being more central." To achieve the kitchen and breakfast nook of her clients' dreams, Alexa worked with Athens Building Company and Atlanta architect Bradley Heppner to reconfigure the space. Part of

it was converted into a scullery, and an addition allowed the kitchen to move back, making room for a new breakfast area.

When it came to aesthetics, Alexa and Lindsey had to marry their vastly different styles. "She doesn't like color or a lot of patterns," says the designer of her client. "She's very neutral, and I'm kind of the total opposite." The two found a compromise, however: Alexa honored Lindsey's love of a neutral palette, while Lindsey was open to some color and patterns. The finished product is a kitchen with soft green-gray cabinets, wood tones, and mixed metals, all of which help create a cozy and welcoming space. The hardware is lacquered brass, while plumbing fixtures are polished nickel. "I like a bit of variation," the designer says, adding that the renovated kitchen exudes a creamy kind of warmth.

Instead of relying on color to make the kitchen pop, Alexa



LEFT | The multi-functional butler's pantry, located off the dining room, is used as a staging area for serving meals and as a storage space.

CENTER | The cheery new dining area looks out over the wooded backyard.

RIGHT | The scullery serves as an overflow space and has a second sink and dishwasher.

BELOW | The original kitchen was cramped and lacked a breakfast nook.



incorporated interesting, design-forward elements. One example is the Taj Mahal quartzite on the island and backsplash, purchased from Vintage Stone in Elberton. "The stone was a really nice way to add another design element without adding a lot of busyness," she says. The range, a cream La Cornue with brass accents, is a showpiece, but the curved stone backsplash shares the spotlight. "It's a way to make a big statement without being too showy." A shelf across the backsplash adds eye-catching dimension as well as functionality. Flanking the range are built-in cabinets with glass uppers that provide plenty of storage as well as display space. A pair of large, gilded iron pendants hang above the island.

In the breakfast room, the back wall was replaced with steel windows and an integrated French door that opens onto the porch. The windows do a lot of the work in the room, so

Alexa kept the rest of the design simple, with a round table by Case & Canvas distinguished by its clover leaf-shaped base and brass rims. The chairs, which feature gently rounded backs, are upholstered in Schumacher's indoor/outdoor vegan leather with a performance finish for durability and easy cleaning. A domed woven seagrass pendant light by Uttermost hangs above the table. "We don't have window treatments, so we needed to soften some of the hard lines in the space," she says.

When Alexa stands in the new breakfast nook, perched above the yard like a treehouse, she's pleased with how the design came together. "On paper, you might say it feels kind of cold and there's not much to it," she says. "But it's really warm and inviting. It feels like a place where you want to hang out."