

TRICKS of the TRADE

A budget makeover transformed this gloomy kitchen into a contemporary chef's delight.

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Faced with a dated kitchen built of quality materials and on a limited budget, the homeowner, Laurretta, needed some clever ideas to pull off this renovation. "The original kitchen was solid American oak, but in a really dark shade, which gave the room an oppressive feel," she says. A keen recycler, she was reluctant to replace a quality solid-wood kitchen with laminate.

A built-in overhang above the granite breakfast bar added to the gloominess of the kitchen. Bright blue walls, dark granite splashbacks and even a granite and timber-framed rangehood, combined to create a very heavy-looking kitchen.

A SMART MOVE

Hiring an interior designer may not be the first solution that comes to mind for people on a budget, but when Laurretta hired Noela Coffey of Department of Interiors, she made a smart move. In bringing Noela on board, Laurretta was able to access her wealth of knowledge and experience, and the tips she acquired saved her a lot of money. "All the basics were here," Noela says. "It was just a matter of fixing it up. It only took a couple of weeks."

[RIGHT] Speckled granite offers visual interest to the benches.





REAL-LIFE RENOVATION



Changing the drawer knobs provided an instant update. The decorative trim on the drawers adds to the appeal.



The makeover proved extremely cost-effective. "People have a misconception that interior designers are expensive," says Noela, "but they're very wrong. We can give ideas and the client doesn't have to spend a fortune; in fact, we save them money as they avoid costly mistakes. I'm often called by stressed people after they've spent their budget but still haven't achieved the look they want."

DECISIVE ACTION

Noela made the bold decision to cut away the heavy overhang above the breakfast bar, which she describes as a "coffin pelmet". This immediately opened up the space and increased the levels of light.

The dark cupboard doors were painted in a French-style aged finish. Noela chose the neutral Dulux Fair Bianca for the job, which was undertaken by tradespeople from Handpainted Finishes. "Painting cupboards only really works if you have a decent timber kitchen to start with," she explains.

The process cost around \$3000 and included the removal of the doors, which were sanded and primed off-site – radically reducing dust and mess. Lauretta saved money by only having the external sides of the doors and trims painted. The dated handles were replaced with wrought-iron knobs to complete the look. "I'm delighted with the results," says Lauretta. "The doors stand up to the wear and tear of a kitchen, and I've had no problems with chipping."

MAKING AN IMPACT

The introduction of black tiled splashbacks gave the kitchen a contemporary edge and Lauretta was delighted with this daring choice. "I'm very much a black and white person, and it looks fantastic," she says. The tiles cost a



NOELA'S DECORATING TIPS:

- To save money, give quality wooden cupboard doors a coat of paint instead of replacing them.
- Even if you're on a budget, it can be more cost-effective to hire a professional than to tackle the job yourself.
- To make further improvements, Noela suggested Lauretta cut down the backs on her chairs. "She could even paint them, although I like some contrasting timber," Noela says. "That would be an easy job for Lauretta to do herself."



Noela Coffey
Interior Designer

[TOP] Reducing the amount of granite took away some of the heaviness from the kitchen.

[MIDDLE] The rattan blind echoes the Balinese-inspired interior of the rest of the home.

[RIGHT] Concealed appliances maintain the character of the kitchen.





Removing the overhang above the breakfast bar had a big impact on the levels of light in the room.

couple of hundred dollars, and made a big impact for such a low price.

The heavy granite and timber rangehood was covered with innovative black glass, which has reflective properties and bounces light around the room. "All the granite was overwhelming," says Noela. She saved time and money by simply tiling over the existing splashbacks, so there was no messy removal work. The rangehood was treated in a similar way, with black glass fixed over the granite.

Lauretta is delighted with the results. "The kitchen is probably one of the best transformations of the whole house for the amount of money spent," she says. "Noela has a fantastic eye for detail."

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Kitchen essentials

- Splashback: tiles
- Paint: Dulux Fair Bianca
- Benchtop: granite
- Cupboards: American oak
- Dishwasher: Dishlex
- Cooktop: Bosch
- Oven: Bosch
- Fridge: General Electric
- Interior design: Noela Coffey, Department of Interiors, phone (02) 9758 8860.