

TODAY'S HOME CATALOGUES are teeming with fashion choices, and everyone can count on finding something that suits their taste. But regardless of personal picks, there's a common quality that binds all good designs, be they traditional or contemporary, decorative or subtle: sophistication. It's not easy to define, but it happens when design, material, layout, lighting and a host of other factors come together to create a room that speaks of quality and craft to anyone who stands in it.

Sophisticated rooms have style, and creating one takes attention to both the big picture and the small details. In this renovation project by Lori Martin Pessot of kitchENVision, upgrades and new approaches to layout turned the listless kitchen and bathroom into vibrant designer spaces with class and character.

Material upgrades are an important part of adding that touch of sophistication. In a kitchen or bathroom, the builder's counters, fixtures, handles and other hardware aren't going to be anything special, and replacing them offers countless ways to inject some personality into the design. But materials and components aren't everything. The new countertops and cabinetry in this kitchen are the basis of its new look, but it is the clever ways in which they are used that produces something more special than just a normal kitchen with nice cupboards.

The island is an obvious change, and as the first thing one sees upon entering the room, it got lots of design attention. It's bigger, bolder and better positioned than it was before, and it makes the kitchen a seamless part of the larger space instead of an

awkward obstacle in the corner. It's also replete with elegant details, from the furniture feet that raise it above the floor to the display doors that formalize the kitchen and add variety to the cabinetry. The boost in height also helps to conceal the main work area, adding a distinct professional feel.

It's always a shame to put high-quality cabinetry up against a clunky builder's kitchen bulkhead. In this kitchen, the protruding section of the bulkhead was removed and the rest concealed with millwork that continues beyond the kitchen and over the door to the adjacent formal dining area. It was impossible to ignore the fact that the previous cabinets were merely hanging there, but now the kitchen has a sense of integration and permanence. To avoid breaking the continuity, while also avoiding the high price tag of a built-in appliance, a standard fridge was paneled and extended upwards to the millwork for seamless inclusion in the design.

To fully realize this kitchen's potential, the last element was lighting. The seemingly random scattering of pot-lights was reorganized into a simpler pattern that draws attention to the kitchen's attractive inner cabinetry, and augmented with pendant lights that emphasize the island centerpiece. The pineapple-shaped cut glass of the pendant lights casts an intriguing pattern on the ceiling – the sort of finishing touch that makes sophistication possible.

Sophistication in a bathroom is all about luxury. This bathroom already had some great features, but some of the builder's design choices seemed to be holding them back. Black

wainscoting made everything feel smaller and obscured the corner tub that should have been a focal point. On the walls the solution was simply to remove it, and around the bathtub it was replaced with an extension of the new floor tiles, then capped with a Corian deck. The changes make the tub much brighter and more inviting, while also making the room seem larger.

To capitalize on this sense of space, the built-in vanity was replaced with a furniture-style vanity that stands above the ground, and the large flat mirror – which lacked any storage – was replaced with floating cabinets. The bathroom windows, already arranged in pairs, were unified with custom dressing that includes central wall



after

before



Resource materials & photos provided by:
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(for more information see Page 126)



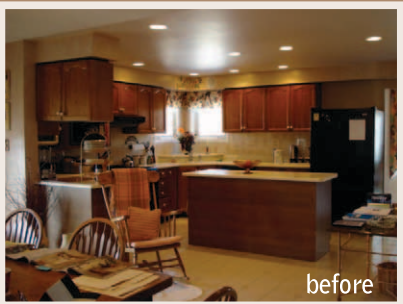
before

after



A Touch of

Sophistication



before

after



sconces. Altogether it creates a spa atmosphere with a formal air, encouraging relaxation and enjoyment.

There's no detailed guide to sophistication in design, just lots of general ideas. It's about having an eye for the little things and being ready to spend time on them, even when they aren't going to be in the foreground. At the same time, it's about teasing the overall décor into shape, until it radiates quality regardless of style. Ultimately, sophistication comes from skilled and innovative design, and once it's achieved it is simply unmistakable. **S**