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A New Jersey Colonial becomes a contemporary haven

BY SHELLEY D. HUTCHINS

Glossy white tile bounces light around the spa-like bath, giving it a cheerful, bright feel.

Top right: A cluster of porcelain pendants illuminates a reclaimed wood dining table for a warm counterpoint to the minimalist kitchen.

Right: The client asked for two kitchen sinks—one on the island across from the stove for prep and a second next to the dishwasher for cleanup.

PHOTOS: COURTNEY APPLE





Renovations often come with challenges, but for this New Jersey project, it meant reinventing the entire essence of the house. For the homeowners and their three young children, transforming their compartmentalized Colonial involved much more than a new look. The clients embrace clean living and a modern aesthetic, so they wanted their home to embody those ideals as well.

Architect Michael Moritz, principal of Colonia, N.J.-based Stonewater Architecture + Interiors, listened to his clients and first suggested they tear down the 1960s home and start fresh. But the couple had already invested in significant second-floor alterations.

Instead, the architect began by eliminating the main level's interior walls and supporting the expanse with an exposed steel beam, creating the Manhattan loft aesthetic the clients desired. The steel beam frames the open kitchen in addition to setting the tone for adjacent areas. Charcoal cabinets echo the beam's dark gray finish, while glossy white countertops, walls, and island brighten the space. The high-contrast color palette also adds interest to the minimalist look, says designer Jenny Madden, of New York-based Jenny Madden Design. A 12-foot-wide-by-4½-foot-tall fixed glass window above the dishwashing station bathes the space in light.

"The house only had 8-foot ceilings," Moritz explains, "so I used some architectural tricks to make them feel higher."

Using an entire wall for glazing meant getting creative with storage. The wife avoids processed foods for her family of five, so she needed extra refrigeration space. Twin 36-inch Sub-Zero units—one fridge and one freezer—serve that purpose while providing a focal point for a wall of storage. Two refrigerator drawers increase fresh-food capacity even further. A walk-in pantry conceals a dehydration station along with containers of dried fruits, granola, and other homemade snacks. And rather than use the public-facing side of the island for seating, both sides offer easily accessible storage.

Enhancing the loft-like features and family togetherness, uninterrupted sightlines link the nearly 400-square-foot kitchen with the adjacent dining and living rooms. Other visual connections include gunmetal end tables matching the steel beam and cabinets. A similarly industrial-looking barn door made from riveted steel panels leads to a new addition just off the family room. Walking through the door, occupants reach a yoga studio after passing a bathroom suite with a roomy sauna.

"We wanted to bring organic elements into the space and maintain the atmosphere of peace that goes with the yoga studio," says Madden of the spa-like bath.

A freestanding soaking tub sits against a backdrop of faux wood tiles with a recessed niche running the width of the wall. Wood veneer on the floating vanity loosely matches the tile. Madden based the wood tones of the bathroom elements on the adjacent sauna. As in the kitchen, the designer generated interest and texture within the serene space by using natural wood finishes in contrast to the bright white fixtures. ■