

WRITTEN BY Meryl Schoenbaum | PHOTOGRAPHED BY Carina Skrobecki Photography
DESIGNED BY Emily Ruff, Cohesively Curated Interiors

Flowing *Like Water*

These kitchen and bath designs were inspired by the home's location on Washington's Puget Sound waterfront.





The kitchen layout was designed to highlight Puget Sound water views, with full-height storage and appliances placed opposite the window wall to keep sightlines open and unobstructed.

Moving forward with plans to renovate your older home is no small task. However, homeowners Rick and Martina Hultz knew they had to make some significant changes for their home to suit their lifestyle. They contacted Emily Ruff, owner and principal designer of Cohesively Curated Interiors, to redesign their kitchen and powder room to better serve their frequent guests.

“The homeowners love to cook and entertain, so the kitchen was focused on those needs and fitting in all the appliances they were looking for,” Emily explains. “Rick and Martina’s must-haves included a 48-inch range, a display cabinet for glassware, four refrigerator/freezers (yes, four!), two dishwashers, a trash compactor and an ice maker. For the powder room, they wanted a space that felt elegant for their guests and had a wow factor.”

The home, located in Washington State’s Federal Way, was built in 1998. Emily recalls her assessment of the updates and upgrades needed in the kitchen and powder room as well as her redesign visions. “My first impression was that the layout of both spaces was okay, but the finishes and fixtures felt dated,” she says. “We wanted the kitchen to feel timeless with a French Country influence and we really wanted the view of the water to be highlighted and unobstructed. We put many of the appliances and full-height storage opposite the sink/window wall and created a focal point with the range and hood. For the powder room, we wanted the space to feel elegant and have a wow factor. We achieved that with the mural wallpaper, crystal sconces and large statement mirror. We also decided to design the vanity to have legs and be up off the floor a bit higher than usual so it feels more like furniture.”





Beaded inset cabinetry and integrated appliances allow the kitchen to balance extensive functionality with a cohesive, furniture-like appearance.

Emily explains how she gave the rooms a cottage-style ambience. “We leaned heavily into classic materials, detailing and softness to achieve a cottage-style feel that still felt elevated and appropriate for a waterfront home,” she says. “In the kitchen, elements like beaded inset cabinetry, a sculptural plaster range hood with traditional corbels and antique brass finishes all nod to a French Country aesthetic. The use of handmade zellige tile for the backsplash added organic variation and warmth, which is key to avoiding anything that feels too new or sterile. In the powder room, we took a similar approach by layering classic materials (Calacatta marble tile in a classic herringbone pattern, traditional plumbing fixtures and warm wood cabinetry) and added personality through wallpaper and vintage-inspired lighting. Both spaces feel collected and timeless rather than overly designed.”

GOING WITH THE FLOW

Emily found inspiration for the rooms’ color story from the great outdoors just outside the door. “The color palette in the kitchen and bath was inspired by the surrounding environment, Puget Sound, the shoreline and the natural light that floods the home,” she says. “The home is on the waterfront and has panoramic water views of Puget Sound and 80 feet of waterfront. We wanted to focus the kitchen design on the view from the windows. We chose warm, neutral tones that would complement the water views rather than compete with them. Soft creams, warm beiges, natural wood tones and aged brass finishes create a sense of calm and continuity throughout the main floor.”



The plaster hood's scale and craftsmanship give the kitchen an Old World European sensibility that feels both timeless and tailored.



Glass-front display cabinets offer space for showcasing glassware while keeping the kitchen light and visually open.

THE POWDER ROOM

Even a small powder room can be enhanced with elegant touches. “The powder room was treated like a jewel box,” Emily says. “We leaned into classic materials, including marble tile flooring, a custom walnut vanity and traditional brass plumbing fixtures. Then we elevated the space with wallpaper and elegant lighting. Because it’s a small room, we allowed ourselves to be a bit bolder, creating a memorable moment for guests while still tying back to the overall aesthetic of the home.”

Emily points out the design elements that made the most difference. “The combination of wallpaper, lighting and vanity design had the biggest impact in the powder room,” she says. “Because it’s a small space, every detail matters. The wallpaper added depth and interest without overwhelming the space. I love a vanity that feels like furniture and adding a thicker edge to a countertop to

highlight the natural stone. The sconces make the space feel special and reinforce that charming, European-inspired aesthetic.”

THE KITCHEN

Of the two room redesigns, the kitchen had the most complex factors to consider. “The kitchen was designed to be both highly functional and visually inviting,” Emily says. “The layout centers around a statement plaster hood, which immediately draws your eye. Beaded inset cabinetry reinforces the traditional aesthetic, while leathered Taj Mahal natural-stone countertops add subtle movement and durability. The lantern-style pendants over the island add warmth while not creating a visual obstruction to see the view and the range hood. Every appliance was thoughtfully integrated, allowing the kitchen to function at a professional level while still feeling like a home.”

BLENDING BUILDS

EMILY'S TIPS FOR RENOVATING OLDER HOMES TO CREATE A SEAMLESS LOOK.

When renovating an existing home, continuity is everything. I always recommend studying the home’s original architecture and letting that guide decisions. Carry consistent trim details, main-flooring material and repeat finishes throughout connected spaces. Avoid introducing too many new materials at once. A renovation should feel like a natural evolution of the home, not a departure from it.



(opposite) Open shelving and woven baskets bring texture and approachability to the pantry while keeping frequently used items within easy reach.

Emily explains why the kitchen cabinets were given careful consideration. “The cabinetry layout had the biggest impact on the kitchen,” she says. “With an unusually large number of appliances, we had to be extremely intentional about where to fit everything. Once appliance placement was finalized, everything else followed. Visually, the custom plaster range hood became the heart of the space. Its shape, scale and hand-applied finish gave the kitchen an Old World European feel. Functionally, incorporating integrated appliance panels and consistent hardware throughout allowed the space to feel cohesive despite its complexity.”

Having to place so many new large appliances in the kitchen space called for a creative approach to solve the situation. “One of our biggest challenges was working within a fixed footprint. We couldn’t alter exterior walls or the stair location, yet we needed to accommodate an extensive appliance list for clients who love to cook and entertain,” Emily explains. “Creativity came into play through precise space planning and custom cabinetry.





The powder room was treated like a jewel box. A scenic mural-style wallpaper adds depth and drama, allowing the small powder room to look both bold and refined.

We designed storage solutions that worked double-duty and ensured that no space was wasted. The pantry was also essential for storage and housing the wine fridge and second dishwasher. Another challenge was achieving the perfect plaster finish on the range hood. It took several attempts and close collaboration with our trades and client, but the result was absolutely worth it.”

Rick and Martina are delighted with the project’s outcome, particularly the form, flow and functionality of their new kitchen. “Our clients love how effortlessly the kitchen now supports their lifestyle,” Emily says. “They frequently entertain, so having ample refrigeration, prep space and dishwashers has been a game changer. The cabinetry is a favorite element. It feels warm, welcoming and perfectly suited to their forever home.”

As for her favorite aspects of the project, Emily points to the collaborative effort of all the parties involved and the level of detail that was achieved. “This project is a great example of how thoughtful design can completely transform how a home functions without changing its footprint,” she says. “It’s also a reminder that collaboration with clients, builders and trades is essential to achieving a truly special result. I love the level of detail we were able to put into this design and that we embraced traditional elements like the beaded inset cabinetry and corbels on the hood. This is a kitchen that will stand the test of time.”

SEE SOURCES, PAGE 111.

GET THE LOOK

EMILY’S ADVICE ON HOW TO RECREATE THESE KITCHEN AND POWDER ROOM DESIGNS.

Focus on timeless materials and thoughtful details. Even small touches like unlacquered or antique-finish brass hardware, classic lighting or inset cabinetry can dramatically change the feel of a space. Prioritize layout and function first, then layer in character through texture, finishes and lighting.

