

A Dad, a Daughter, and a Custom-Designed Kitchen Table



How One New York City Apartment's Kitchen Went from Maddening to Majestic

Setting the Scene: A Tale of Two Cities

Harry and Marcia Hochman lived in Florida. Their daughter, Beth, attended Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons in New York City. But then, Beth lost the housing lottery and needed a place to live. Harry, a real estate developer, did his homework and decided that buying a New York City apartment would be a wise investment with a two-fold purpose: a place for Beth to live while she finished school and place for he and his wife to stay when they visited—and perhaps someday lived in—the city.

Enter The Majestic, a housing cooperative located at 115 Central Park West in Manhattan. Built in the early 1930s, it had replaced the Hotel Majestic, which had been constructed in the late 1800s. The building had history, romance, charm—even curb appeal. But it also had the out-datedness and damage you'd expect from a structure over seven decades old.

“Majestic” Challenges of Epic Proportions

Harry recalls, “The kitchen was 25-40 years old; the building 80 years old. Nothing worked. It was livable, but barely. It was dark and had little light. There were enormous plumbing problems and leaks and lost and loose floorboards. Signs of neglect were everywhere. But we made the decision to buy it and renovate it for Beth’s medical school years, and also for our needs if and when we were ever in New York.”

As an all-out renovation began, it quickly became clear that the kitchen redesign was going to be a major undertaking. How do you return an apartment to its original majesty, while satisfying the needs of a 20-something woman and her parents? Who monitors the work while “half” of the client keeps odd medical-school hours and the other “half” resides thousands of miles away? How do you get the best-of-the-best in interior designers, architects, general contractors, kitchen designers, cabinetmakers (and everyone in between) to work together while balancing schedules egos at the same time? And just how *do* you turn an obsolete kitchen into something elegant, yet functional; innovative, yet practical?

A Team Approach (But Not Too Many Cooks in the “Kitchen)

The Hochmans—Harry & Marcia as well as Beth—realized they needed someone on-site to coordinate the renovation efforts. They chose Dan Silver, owner of Silver Architecture, for this role.

Regarding Dan, Harry says, “He coordinated the whole project. We needed someone who was there—on site—in New York, who understood the politics of the building, and who was accustomed to the political environment of getting things done. He understood co-op construction, permits, dealing with historic buildings, and he knew and worked with the staff at the Majestic from the superintendent to the elevator operator. This is important. Think about when you need to get large items up a freight elevator. Dan knew how to work with people so they were happy to accommodate us.”

From there, a seasoned general contracting company—All Points Construction—was hired. The company had worked in the Majestic before, and it had come highly recommended by Dan Silver. Kendall Marcelle, owner of Kendall Marcelle Design Associates, was also brought on board. Based in Florida, Kendall had worked on numerous interior design projects for the Hochmans over the years. While the Hochmans were—and remain—enamored with Kendall’s work, they knew they couldn’t ask her to go back and forth from Florida to New York. They wanted someone closer, especially for the kitchen renovation. And, more important, they wanted someone who specialized in storage challenges, someone who had the expertise to create a beautiful, functional kitchen in a modest space. The question, of course, was who?

Majestic Meets Luxury

Beth Hochman enjoys telling the story about an email from her dad—an email that led father and daughter to the kitchen designer who would help transform their kitchen dream into reality. The email was short and to the point: “Beth, what do you think of this kitchen, especially the table feature? Dad.”

The table feature he was referring to had been one he’d seen in the most unusual of places. Harry recalls, “I was in a grocery store check-out line and saw a magazine that featured kitchen design for small spaces. There was a table that caught my eye as being a possible solution to our kitchen renovation’s needs.”

Marcia adds, “We also went to the HGTV web site to get more follow up information after seeing the picture.”

“Essentially, we cold called Rosemary from that picture in the article,” Harry says.

“Rosemary” is Rosemary Porto, owner of Luxury Kitchen, which is based in Boston. For over 20 years, Rosemary has made innovative design her specialty. She has a knack for turning impossibly small spaces into elegant, yet functional, kitchens.

Kitchen Table Surprise

The kitchen table referenced in the email Harry sent to his daughter was a table that Rosemary designed for what HGTV.com labeled an “Urban Kitchen.”

Rosemary says, “This particular client enjoyed entertaining, but felt the smallness of the kitchen would put limitations on the number of guests who could be invited. My solution was an



extended table—one that expanded from underneath the kitchen island, where it was connected. This rollout table was easy to use, elegant, innovative, and comfortably sat eight people. My client fell in love with all these features—and so did the guests.”

The Hochmans, too, fell in love with this inspired kitchen table concept—and Rosemary’s kitchen design portfolio in general.

“The table was what was central and caught our eye,” Beth says. “We needed a solution

for the small space in the kitchen. Our goals were to have maximum counter space and maximum storage, all while putting a high value on aesthetics. Rosemary’s expertise in design allowed us to create a kitchen that uses every square inch.”

In addition to the space challenges, “generational” challenges existed: pleasing not only the 50-something Hochmans, Marcia and Harry, but also—and especially—their 20-something daughter Beth, who would be the one using the kitchen, at least, in the short-term. In essence, Rosemary united two generations and three very different opinions. Beth adds, “She did all of this while maximizing the quantity of space we had and making us feel like we actually gained square footage.”

Dan Silver agrees, saying that another challenge facing Rosemary was making sure the kitchen matched the themes in the rest of the apartment—themes generated by him and Kendall, the interior designer. Dan says, “I completed my initial drawings and sketches and gave them to Rosemary. Then Rosemary worked out the details of the kitchen based on my sketches. For example, the design elements and details, like the inner workings of the kitchen drawers, were all part of Rosemary’s role. There was great effort to integrate the lines of the kitchen into the design of the rest of the apartment.”

Kendall notes that while she and Rosemary didn’t interface much for this project (they did collaborate on the kitchen sink’s backsplash) the success of this full-apartment renovation, especially the kitchen, was because each hired expert was allowed to do his or her job. “I think it worked well that we were not all on site; that would have been too many cooks in the kitchen. I think it was ideal that we were able to do our jobs so well virtually.”

Helping a Young Woman Find Her Concept of Home

The old adage is true: home is where the heart is, and for Beth, heart and home meet in the kitchen. Growing up, Beth enjoyed the time she spent with her mom in their kitchen, a place where her mother shined. Beth says, “My mother is an amazing cook. I am lucky; I grew up with delicious home cooked food. My mother’s experience as a cook makes her really good at knowing what a kitchen needs, and how to design a really nice kitchen. We’ve lived in several homes, and in each case, my mother always designed the kitchen.”

At the same time, Beth had ideas about what she wanted, ideas that her parents respected. Her parents add, “Beth loves clean lines and is inspired by a feeling of spaciousness. We wanted Beth to be our guide and not get in the way of what she wanted for the apartment. In our hearts, we wanted Beth to love her New York City apartment”

An artist at heart, Beth drew pictures and shared them with Rosemary and Dan to express her ideas. The young medical student wanted to be sure all the things she wanted could fit in her new kitchen—from pots and pans to a Sub-Zero refrigerator. As the project evolved and Beth entered her fourth year at school, her involvement in the project only increased. But that doesn’t mean she didn’t welcome advice and direction from the kitchen design expert.



Beth says, “Rosemary was great. She listened to my ideas, and she had the job of balancing my ideas with my parent’s ideas and coming up with a unifying concept. Rosemary also educated me on things I would not have considered in the design. For example, I thought I wanted a cabinet with pullouts for the pots and pans. But Rosemary recommended deep drawers from Poggenpohl instead.” Poggenpohl is a Germany-headquartered company that’s known for its innovative cabinet designs, which use every last inch of space. Beth admits she was doubtful at first. “I was skeptical, even as I saw the model. But I went with Rosemary’s advice, and I do love the drawers. They are so much better than the cabinets would have been.”

And then, of course, came the kitchen table. Rosemary had the vision, and she turned to Bob Watts of Granite Metal Services in Dorchester, Mass., to turn it—and Beth and

her parents’ dream—into reality.

Kitchen Collaboration Leads to Table Masterpiece

Rosemary and Bob had collaborated on numerous projects before, including a kitchen in Boston's historic Beacon Hill—a kitchen that won an award for best minimalist kitchen in [this year](#).

Rosemary shared her ideas and hopes with Bob. He recalls, “There was a table in the kitchen that required a special solution. There was a little cabinet, and we did not want to put a counter there that would require people having to bend down to open the cabinet. So we came up with a drop-leave system. We wanted to make it removable without any tools. Because of Beth’s aesthetic leanings, we wanted the design to be clean and straightforward. Something simple, not fancy.” And something much like the original table that Beth and her parents had seen on the HGTV.com website.



The result was just what the soon-to-be doctor had ordered: a table that was original, yet functional.

The Hochmans agree that the collaboration between Rosemary and Bob was genius. “His skills in counter combined with her design expertise helped to create an innovative solution for our table. This was an amazing enhancement to the kitchen. The flip-top table comes down and there is added storage behind the table.”

The Results: One Luxury Kitchen...Many Happy Hearts

Beth says, “The kitchen today is the heart of the apartment. I am in there even when I’m not cooking or eating. It is a beautiful, streamlined, and well-organized space.”

As for her favorite aspect of the kitchen? Beth admits that it’s hard to single out one area or one “thing,” although her extended kitchen table—the item that led her and her parents to Rosemary—is a definite crowd-pleaser. Beth adds, “I am in *love* with the flip-out table, which turned out to be an incredible extra to the design of the room. This aspect exceeded my expectations.”



As for appliances, the whole family enjoys many. “My favorite appliance is the built-in coffee maker. My dad’s favorite appliance is probably the wine refrigerator, and my mother probably would say she loves the Sub-Zero glass-door refrigerator,” says Beth.

No doubt, the Majestic is finally a place where at least one apartment has a kitchen that truly lives up to its building’s name.