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Kitchen of DISTINCTION

A couple's love of Art Deco is embodied in
the many design details of their kitchen reno

BY RACHEL SA & BRUCE KIRKLAND • PHOTOGRAPHY BY GILLIAN JACKSON



Dramatically expanding our east-end Toronto house was about more than increasing floor space. The project also allowed us to expand our horizons for our dream kitchen.

So, when we took on a whole-home renovation of our vintage detached house in the Upper Beaches, we knew the kitchen would become the focal point that could and should define the entire project. But how to begin?

The first kitchen designers we sat down with were all talk and blather about trends, “in” colours, and how to quickly install a kitchen that would provide a short-term “resale value.” But we were not interested in being trendy, nor were we planning to flip the house.

We wanted a timeless kitchen: one that would reflect our personalities and serve our needs for years to come—yet still honour the heritage of our 1923 house. We also wanted a kitchen that would provide a showcase for our collections of kitchen antiques while creating a warm and welcoming space to cook and to receive family and friends.

DESIGNER SYMPATICO

Then we found Chestnut Grove Cabinetry and Design. President and designer Franco Giampietro began our first meeting with the pivotal question that clinched the deal:

“Can you tell me about yourselves and how you would want to use the kitchen?” he asked over espresso and pastries. We were sitting in the comfort of Chestnut Grove’s easily accessible design and millwork studio in Concord, just on the edge of Toronto. What followed was a creative journey of collaboration that resulted in our dream Art Deco kitchen.



ABOVE: The heavy duty Boos Block makes an ideal prep centre and keeps the main island free for guests to gather and mingle

LEFT: A sample of Rachel's jadeite dinnerware, dating from the 1930s through the 1950s

Through conversation, Franco learned about both of us as individuals and as a married couple. We love to cook, we love to entertain, and we love to express ourselves through our collections of antique glass and dinnerware. Franco used this information about who we are and what we love to inspire his unique, personalized design.

"The difference between Chestnut Grove and routine kitchen places is that we're not simply a kitchen place," Franco says. "We're a design studio. And design is critical in a kitchen, which is one of the most important environments in your home. It is where friends and family gather and where you entertain. So it is a representation of who you are. It tells a lot about you."

"I look at my designs as a way of telling a story about the individuals involved. That's why I say our creations at Chestnut Grove go beyond the custom-made. Our creations are tailored to you. Most shops can make something that is 'custom' for their clients, but really the inspiration for it is often just a clone of something that they saw in a magazine. It did not arise from the lives of the people who will live in the house. Our creations do."

COLLECTION-INSPIRED

Franco's first inspiration sparked when Bruce enthused about his collection of Mauviel copper cooking pots from France. Acquired over years of travel to the Cannes Film Festival, Franco recognized that this collection would become a centrepiece for the kitchen, with the hanging pots gathered around the gas range. Further discussions led to Art Deco, with design touches that would be perfect for the copper and iron of the pots and for the age of the house.

Rachel's beloved collection of jadeite—green-glass dinnerware dating from the 1930s through the 1950s—provided another spark. The jadeite needed a home in the new kitchen, somewhere to be safely displayed while dazzling the eye and providing a splash of vivid colour to a kitchen that would otherwise be creamy whites, burnished blacks and vintage metal hues. Franco designed an open-display shelf above the apron sink. Combined with the glass-fronted, LED-illuminated upper cabinets that would house the best among our pressed glass goblets from the 1800s, Franco's design

would literally allow our personalities to be on display.

Subtle Art Deco features abound throughout, from the wood molding around our gas range and our cast-iron Kohler sink, to the triple-step crown in the pass-through from kitchen to dining room, to the inset display cabinet in one wall where Bruce keeps his collection of antique bar items. Plus, the same architectural feature is picked up in the splendid archway between the living and dining rooms.

A SYMPHONY OF COLOUR, FIXTURES AND FINISHES

In the kitchen, coconut-coloured upper cabinets with vintage-style glass pulls transition to dark artfully distressed lower cabinets. The countertops are topped by soft white Caesarstone with subtle swirls of grey in the quartz.

A large island with its own Kohler bar sink and a large serving area adds both to the look and utility of the kitchen. It instantly became an ideal place to receive guests, with room for a charcuterie board and appetizers while

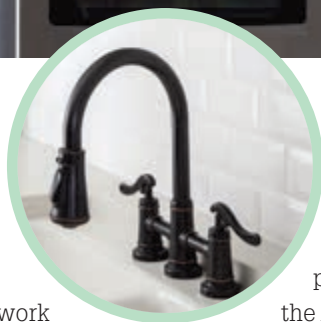


Finished in copper automotive paint, the range hood perfectly complements the nearby Mauviel pots hanging from custom-made display bars.

people sample cocktails. Friends and family freely gather around this welcoming space, yet the design leaves plenty of preparation space in the work areas to prepare dinner or to shake another cocktail. Critically, nothing is crammed in, especially not in front of the Bosch gas range and built-in wall oven and microwave from Appliance Canada.

Because the kitchen workspace is so open, there is also room for a Boos Block from Total Tabletop Plus in Mississauga. This high-quality butcher's block becomes a convenient and attractive chopping and assembly station, while the rich wood-cutting surface, jet-black body, and copper touches make it a perfect fit with the rest of the Art Deco design.

Franco and his team members were involved in every aspect. Franco even made himself available to give expert



advice on light fixtures, faucets and other touches to ensure that every piece of the kitchen puzzle fit and was true to the Art Deco design.

PIÈCE DE RÉSISTANCE

The final flourish was also a Franco contribution—a tailored, one-of-a-kind, Art Deco range hood cover. The design was inspired by Bruce's trips to Manhattan, where he admired the Art Deco art above the door of 181 Madison Avenue, the Madison Belmont Building and New York's first Art Deco structure.

SOURCES

KITCHEN DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION: chestnutgrove.ca

APPLIANCES: appliancecanada.com **SINKS AND FAUCETS:** lowes.ca

LIGHT FIXTURES: lowes.ca **BACKSPLASH AND FLOOR TILES:** olympiatile.com

PAINTING: Philip George Painting

Franco and his team, Cassandra Brandow and Henry Sanchez, replicated the iron-work design for our range hood cover, deftly bending the design around the sides. Finished in copper automotive paint, the piece perfectly complements the nearby Mauviel pots hanging from custom-made display bars. "The range hood cover is a prime example of what we call a tailored piece," says Franco. "Everything that we did with it is literally tailored to an individual's personality—and it also becomes a piece of art. It's a centerpiece that the customer ends up sharing with visitors. It's more than just a focal point. Some designers might do an accent wall or display an object and call that a focal feature. But this approach is very personal. It's meant to represent your experiences in life and the things you're attracted to."

In the end, thanks to an extraordinarily easy, productive collaboration, our entire Art Deco kitchen is now tailored specifically to our lives, our loves and our personalities. ♦

Homeowners Rachel Sa and Bruce Kirkland are award-winning writers and journalists who think they must have been a little crazy to undertake a whole-home renovation in Toronto's Upper Beaches.

