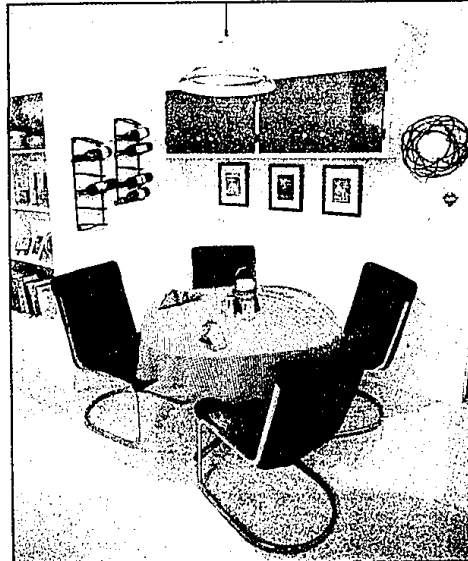


Home for the holidays

REMODELING



Kitchen comforts: Keith and Joanne Owings stand in the kitchen of their home in Redford. They gave the kitchen a facelift last winter, installing new floor tiles and painting the walls during the week between Christmas and New Year's Day.



A French cafe: The kitchen table is accented well by the pictures on the wall and the nearby wine racks. Below, the kitchen range and microwave now occupy the table to open up space in the eating area.

Redford couple uses time 'off' to give kitchen a new look

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So what will you do during the Christmas and New Year's Day holidays?

Most couples celebrate, relax with families and friends and enjoy the comforts of home. But one year ago Keith and Joanne Owings weren't like these couples.

They undertook a major challenge many young couples face: try to remodel their home for a minimal amount of money. And try to do it during a holiday break.

An outdated home

The couple purchased the home, described by Joanne as a "typical 1960s setup," six months earlier and felt it needed a facelift. The kitchen featured dark brown paneling, linoleum flooring and shag carpet. The previous owner had separated a working area near a sink and an eating area at a small table with a peninsula-type counter, affectionately dubbed "the ironing board" by the couple.

The house's condition was a mixed bag; some of it well-kept, some of it in shambles, Owings said. "What needed to be done was an update."

Keith, a Livonia native, and Joanne, originally from Baltimore, pulled out hammers, nails and paint brushes. "Our goal was to make the kitchen 'one' and brighten the whole area," said Joanne, an accounts supervisor at U. Walter Thompson.

But first, Keith, who's employed at UPS as a sorter and attending Wayne State University to obtain a teaching degree, rebuilt the stairs and landing with help from his father, Dale Owings, before the remodeling started in the kitchen. They ripped out the old stairs and landing and installed new stairs, flooring and baseboard on the landing.

The couple worked over the holidays to brighten up the kitchen. During the week between Christmas and New Year's Day, Keith and Joanne tore down wallpaper, washed and primed walls, and painted the walls and ceiling. They also removed the shag carpet, exposing a hardwood floor underneath. Removing the dried carpet glue from the hardwood surface proved to be too difficult a task for the couple, so they decided to tile the floor.

They removed a fluorescent light and a ceiling fan and installed two pendant lamps. "They painted the room antique white. 'It was just so dark and dismal in here, I wanted it brighter,'" Joanne said.

Keith removed doors permanently from the kitchen entrances. "Each opening had doors, and you had to close the door to use the kitchen sink," said Joanne. The sink also was replaced.

"We also ripped out the peninsula, because it separated the room," said Keith. "Our goal was to make it one unit, one kitchen, and get rid of everything that separated it." (It now is a galley-type kitchen.)

"(The refrigerator and stove) really jammed things up," Keith said, pointing to where the refrigerator and stove once were located, along an inside wall of the kitchen. Those units were moved on the other side of the kitchen, where they were plugged into a new outlet. Today a table sits where the appliances once stood and the wall displays five pictures to provide a French cafe decor.

"It gives it a country feel," said Joanne.

Building a new look

They installed blinds from Budget Decor in White Lake. New light fixtures were purchased from Restoration Hardware. They bought cabinet knobs from Classic Hardware in Livonia, floor tile from Lowe's, paid for in part with a \$100 gift certificate.



Keith also fixed other annoyances, such as floor squeaks, before they put down the tile. "You could go down in the basement and see a lot of the nails missed the joists," Keith said. "It was bad," Joanne said about the noise.

They wanted a natural look, but not an outdoorsy appearance, with the new floor tiles. The floor also features marble edges, accenting the open doorways.

The kitchen isn't the only room to undergo a change in scenery and utility. They also remodeled the bathroom. It now has some new tile and new grout, sink, toilet and new lights.

In the garage, Keith also updated the electrical wiring, and installed new garage doors, storm doors and windows. Owings used scrap wood from the old basement stairs and created garage shelves with them.

Walk down the new stairs into the basement and check out another project. The basement will be converted to a 400-square foot family room. It now houses a television, sound system, chairs and sofa.

They now relax downstairs and watch television or listen to music. They moved their entertainment center, sofas and chairs downstairs after Keith remodeled that area with drywall, new electrical outlets and lights. A drop ceiling is planned for the area as well.

The house is shaping up into a home that serves the couple well for entertainment and relaxation. Remodeling the kitchen was a heckuva way to spend a Christmas break, a remodel job that cost only \$769.

"We really made (the home) more livable," said Joanne. "We have a large kitchen area, a large dining room and a larger living space."

"We weren't able to increase the square footage of the house, but we did increase the square footage of the living space."



More storage: Shelves provide not only storage for cookbooks, but an open display of candles, a plant and other personal touches to enliven the room.

INSIDE



JOE GAGNON

A need to clean

The Appliance Doctor has information on how you can clean your dishwasher. See Home Work, Page 2



HARRY JACHYM

Early garden plans

Don't be afraid to spend a little more for quality this holiday season. See Ask Dad, Page 3



HOMETOWN LIFE

Sweet Dreamzz:

This Farmington Hills charity group has packed up presents to be distributed to 3,500 inner-city kids next week. See Hometown Life, C5