

FEATURE REMODEL

## SINGIN' THE BLUES

How a tired kitchen became  
a shout-out space



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**A TIMELESS BUT BOLD** navy color brightens the island, while crisp white subway tiles lighten the walls. On the floor, 7-inch-wide planks of quarter-sawn white oak replaced the original plain-sawn white oak of half that width. "The new cut, which shows less grain, plus the wider planks, results in a clean, contemporary look," says lead designer Cecelia Daniels.

# SINGIN' THE BLUES

This kitchen's crisp white and catchy blue are a sunny contrast to its brown beginnings

STORY BY LISA TRUESDALE

PHOTOS BY ALIVESTUDIOS.COM

**W**hen Shaina and Chad Conrad moved into their north Boulder home in 2014, they wanted to make some changes, but they weren't sure exactly what those should be. They tried simple cosmetic fixes to refresh the space—removed an inset rug, updated furnishings and replaced window coverings—but in 2018, with two young children running around, they realized exactly what changes to make: Rip it out and start over.

The main level of their 1999 neo-Victorian home had several interior walls and a long hallway dividing up the space. The Conrads wanted an open area, where they could keep tabs on the kids. "Whenever you were on the first floor, you couldn't see what was happening in the rest of the house," Chad says, "and we wanted to be able to see the kids at all times."

After asking friends and business acquaintances for referrals, and meeting with five different architects, the Conrads chose Boulder's ▶

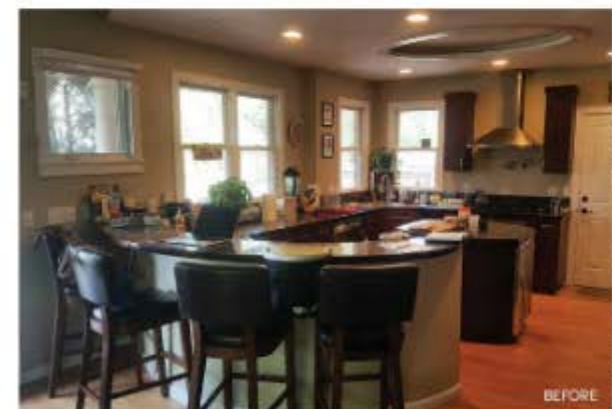


**THE OVERSIZE ISLAND** is replete with storage, an oven and fancy-yet-simple drawer pulls, and covered with a slate Caesarstone Rugged Concrete countertop. Painted in eye-catching navy, the island is the kitchen's focal point and homeowner Shaina Conrad's favorite feature.





**THE VISION FOR THE CONRADS' NEW KITCHEN** included completely reconfiguring the existing layout, integrating the appliances into new white cabinetry and switching out the awkward curved bar for an oversize, custom-built island.



BEFORE

PHOTO COURTESY OF RADWIN ARCHITECTURE & SKYCASTLE CONSTRUCTION

Radwin Architecture & Skycastle Construction to bring their vision to life.

"Radwin has a great reputation and we really felt 'heard' by Scott [Radwin] and Brandon [David]," Chad says. "We especially appreciated their honesty about things to watch out for during a remodel, and common pitfalls regarding budget and time."

Radwin and the project's lead designer, Cecelia Daniels, agreed with the Conrads' assessment of their cramped space, and how to improve it.

"The original house had such a dark and dysfunctional floor plan that didn't serve the family's lifestyle," Daniels explains. "We decided to take down the walls on the first floor to create a sunny, open-concept plan where all the public social spaces connect." ▶

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PHOTO: CONCRETE CONNECTIONS

A CUSTOM-BUILT NAVY BLUE WINE BAR carries the catchy color palette from the dining room to the great room. The doorway off the great room leads to a new playroom for the kids. "It's private enough that the adults can enjoy a little peace and quiet," says architect Scott Rodwin, "but close enough that it's easy to keep an eye on them."

### Organizing Life's Clutter

First, Rodwin's team completely gutted and rearranged the entire first floor. "We changed the points of entry to create a proper space to welcome guests and organize the clutter of life," says Rodwin, explaining that there is now a foyer and a proper mudroom for corralling coats and shoes.

Then they rebuilt the sagging, faded wrap-around porch and opened up the large south wall by installing prominent windows and doors to integrate the indoor/outdoor spaces and enhance the home's passive-solar aspect.

It was the kitchen, though, that needed the most help. "The cabinets and the countertops were very dark," Shaina says, "and there was a huge curved bar that took up a lot of space unnecessarily."

"The Conrads wanted functional and fresh," Daniels explains, "so we completely modernized it and opened it up." The collaboration with the couple was fun and easy, she says. "Shaina and I clicked right away on a shared vision for the house. She would throw out an idea or image, and I would run with the visualization on how to adapt her ideas to suit the project."

When choosing materials, Daniels says, "We tried to strike a balance between fun, contemporary and fresh while avoiding anything too trendy to maintain a classic, long-lasting look." A simple color palette of slate, oak, crisp white and Sherwin-Williams "In the Navy" paint was used throughout to tie the spaces together.

"We all loved the idea of an accent color for the kitchen island cabinets and landed on navy, which is classic, but bold when applied that way," Daniels says. (Life did they know that, just two years later, a strikingly similar color would be named the 2020 Pantone Color of the Year.) ▶

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"LOOKING BACK, WE'RE SO THANKFUL WE FOLLOWED OUR GUT AND MADE THE CHANGE."



THE REMODELED OPEN-CONCEPT plan allows friends and family to seamlessly flow from indoors to out. Slate tiles arranged in a herringbone pattern define the entryway, while custom cabinets and drawers catch coats and boots.

### "Uh-oh" Moment

The remodel was completed in 2018, and the Conrads say they still find new things to be pleased about.

"We are so thankful for how awesome our home is, and we feel so lucky that we were able to quarantine in it," says Shaina, who claims to be especially obsessed with the concrete countertops and the big island—although it almost ended up being too big.

"We had a bit of an 'uh-oh' moment with it," she says. "It was custom-built and when it was finished, we walked into the kitchen and realized

that it was just too large and made the space feel extremely tight"—exactly what they were trying to avoid. Although the remodel was almost complete at that point, and redoing the island would balloon the budget and push out the move-in date (or move-back-in date, as it were), the Conrads ultimately decided to change it.

"We couldn't go through this whole remodel and regret not doing it," Chad says. "Looking back, we're so thankful we followed our gut and made the change."

The kitchen island is also pretty popular with the couple's son and daughter, now 6 and 4, who like to hang out there and "help" with the cooking—that is, when they're not chasing each other or the dog around the sunlit first floor.

"But at least when they're doing that, now we can see them!" laughs Shaina. ☺

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