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Designer tricks for the kitchen

Architects and interiors specialists share their secret sources, strategies for clever styling, organizing tips, and other home updates you can do yourself.

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Clear the decks If a jumble of small appliances is cluttering your countertops, clean them and start over, says interior architect Lisa Foster, principal of the Providence firm Reconstructure. Choose your most-used tool as a starting point — the coffee maker, for example — and put anything that doesn't match it in the cabinets.



(Photo by Eric Roth)

Create a splash Adding a backsplash is a great way to spruce up a kitchen, and you don't have to use tile.

HGTV.com's Taniya Nayak suggests using vinyl wallpaper — it's inexpensive and easy to clean — instead. She likes Moda wallpaper, which is sold at Waltham Wallpaper & Paint (\$80 and up per roll). Waltham Wallpaper & Paint, 591 Main Street, Waltham, 781-893-3732, <http://walthamwallpaperandpaint.com>

Steel yourself Another Taniya Nayak tip: Update old appliances with faux stainless-steel contact paper. It's sold by the roll at design-minded hardware stores and online (search for "stainless-steel contact paper").

Make color work Try a red or a green color scheme in your kitchen. According to Lisa Foster, they offer desirable personal and environmental benefits: Reds whet the appetite, greens suppress it. Her picks for wall paints are C2 LoVo and Benjamin Moore Aura.

Brighten at the top If you have a small kitchen with a strip of wall between your cabinet tops and ceiling, install a mirror along the wall, says architect Stephen Chung. The ceiling looks as if it extends infinitely, he says, and makes the space feel roomier. He recommends Wallex Glass in Arlington (\$11 per square foot if you have it installed, \$5 if you install it yourself). Wallex Glass, 1476 Massachusetts Avenue, Arlington, 781-648-7600, <http://wallexglass.com>

Step on it Since cabinets are usually all one color, use Flor's patterned modular tiles to add pattern to your kitchen, says North Quincy designer Melinda Cabanilla. Circle Furniture carries the tiles locally, and you can find an even bigger selection at Flor's company website (<http://flor.com>). Circle Furniture, 425 Great Road, Acton, 978-263-7268, and other locations; <http://circlefurniture.com>



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Get a grip The easiest way to update old cabinets is to install new handles or knobs, says Providence's Lisa Foster, who likes the inexpensive and fun stainless-steel finish Attest handles from IKEA. "Always look for solid or single-piece construction," she recommends. "Handles composed of multiple parts can unscrew or break over time."

Start really, really fresh If your wooden cabinets are old and outdated, paint them, Taniya Nayak says. The trick to a nice result is thoroughly cleaning and lightly sanding surfaces to remove any oil or grime before applying Kilz, her recommended primer. Then paint cabinets and frames in a semigloss or satin-finish paint. For the kitchen, she says, use Benjamin Moore in black or antique white.

Shelve it Create displays of glasses, dishes, or containers on open shelving, suggests Marblehead residential designer Molly Frey. Wooden shelving brackets similar to the ones pictured here are easy to make, she says, or for a wide selection of ready-made brackets (\$50 and up per shelf), visit

Lynn Lumber. Lynn Lumber, 180 Commercial Street, Lynn, 781-592-0400, <http://lynnlumber.com>

Write things For a playful backsplash or even for a whole wall, interior designer Stephanie Rossi of Spazio Rosso in Foxborough recommends using Benjamin Moore Chalkboard Paint. She used the paint to create an area for grocery lists in one client's home.

Put it out there "Green and white is a perpetually fresh palette," says Sarah Desmond, an interior designer at Jody Trail Designs in Sudbury, so "accessorize" with items from your fridge by setting out fruit or other produce in pretty bowls.

Correction: *Because of an editing error, the location of interior designer Stephanie Rossi's business was incorrectly identified in Sunday's Globe magazine story about designer tricks for every room. It is based in Foxborough. ■*