



No Fuss,

NO FUSS

Update your kitchen with a lick of paint



BY **WILLIAM MACDONALD**

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **STEPHANI BUCHMAN**

Near the completion of an extensive renovation to a 1920s north Toronto home, I had a heated debate with the homeowners over whether to paint or not to paint their kitchen cabinets. Since the kitchen was in fairly good shape, we decided to just do a little “cosmetic job.” By cosmetic, I meant fresh coats of paint, updated hardware, etc., or so I thought. When I showed them the colour I had planned for the cabinets, a beautiful dove grey, they said: “Wait, we’re painting the cabinets?”

In an effort to save funds, they expected we’d leave the cabinets alone and just do the walls; they thought the cabinets were fine and of a good quality. True, the cabinets were “fine and good” but, in my

**TIPS:**

- ◆ **When it comes to choosing colours for your cabinets, it is best to err on the side of classic colours such as blues, whites, blacks, greys and creams**
- ◆ **A strong look for kitchen cabinets is mixing light and dark colours. It all depends on your space and look but generally for a more balanced feel, choose a light colour for uppers and a darker colour for the bottom cabinets**

opinion, they were a little dated colour-wise. At our design firm, we don't like to do just "fine," when we can do "wow!"

I explained to the homeowners that having worked on tons of kitchens, the quickest way to update a kitchen, at a very low cost, is with paint and accessories. Painting cabinets and replacing the hardware can completely transform a kitchen and doesn't cost a fortune. There are a few things to consider though when updating cupboards.

COLOUR IS YOUR FRIEND

When designing a kitchen, I like it to be approachable, functional and playful. Gone are the days of just all-brown or all-white cabinets, although all-white can work in very contemporary or very traditional kitchens.

I like to paint the majority of the cabinetry in one colour then use an accent colour on an island, pantry door, counter stools or the interior of cabinets. For example, a previous client's cupboards and island were painted in the same striking shade of blue, the kitchen was accented with great art, and counter stools were covered in vintage-orange leather. The result was stylish with a "rad-trad" mix...very chic.

For another homeowner's project, which was a very large and light-filled family kitchen, I used a silvery-grey colour on the bulk of the cabinets and a very strong bright white on the island and range hood. The contrast provides tension and when mixed with Carrera marble, the counters and backsplash become extremely elegant.

SOFT SPOT FOR HARDWARE

Early in my career, I had a wonderful client who was obsessed with hardware. Besides teaching me a lot, she subsequently imparted her passion for knobs and hinges to me. Beyond its practical assistance, hardware can be the best accessory a kitchen can have.

Buy the best quality hardware and be sure to try it on. Try holding it in your hand to see how it feels. Is it too tight? Too light? Does it feel cheap? It's like trying on a pair of shoes; hardware has to fit to work and look beautiful.

When considering an update to your kitchen, you don't always have to reach for the hammer. Try the paintbrush and the screwdriver first. Adding colour to your cabinetry and a few other bits and pieces can completely enliven a tired kitchen and give it that wow-factor that makes a world of difference.◆

Toronto-based designer, William MacDonald, is the principal of WillMac Design. His firm is best known for creating stylish approachable spaces that evoke a simple, timeless elegance. Servicing clientele throughout Canada, the U.S. and overseas. willmacdesign.ca @willmacdesign

