

KITCHEN SPECIAL

# Modern Whimsy

*Scandinavian design meets a playful sense of style in a Calgary kitchen made for a fun-loving family.*

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Photographs by MARTIN TESSLER



**Fun House**  
Homeowners John Johnston and Sara Simpson spotted staggered pendant lights in local restaurant Model Milk and decided to emulate the look at home (above).

**Mix It Up**  
The dining set (opposite) is a mix of seating styles, with an important chair at the head: it belonged to Simpson's grandmother.



**Show Stopper**

Johnston emigrated from England and had a lot of nostalgic collectibles. Architect Robert Pashuk incorporated open display into the cabinets for a rotating showcase.

**Light Fantastic**

Twelve-foot ceilings allowed for seven-foot windows, the latter inspired by Johnston's time at the University of Edinburgh.



**Homes & Design**

**Smart Tips**

**1 Opt for drawers under the counters rather than cabinets.** It's easier to pull plates and pots out of large drawers than to root around at the back of a low, dark cupboard.

**2 Incorporate meaningful, personal elements** into an otherwise sleek kitchen to give it a warm, conversation-worthy appeal.

**3 Make your everyday dishware part of the scenery** with a glass-front or partial sliding door on one or more cupboards.

**4 Don't be afraid to use a variety of woods in the kitchen:** a combination of fir and maple provides a warm yet modern effect.

**5 Embrace unusual places to display art in the kitchen,** where wall space is at a premium. Don't be afraid to break the rules by hanging a piece higher, lower or in a tighter space than you normally would.



**Colour Cool**

Orange is Johnston's favourite colour—as seen in both the Le Creuset kettle and, more impressively, the Viking range.

**View to a Thrill**

The farmhouse sink (top right) is slated for dish duty (a prep sink on the island handles cooking needs), so Simpson wanted it placed in front of the window.

**Smart Storage**

The storage garage (right) is actually cantilevered on the outer wall of the house, creating valuable storage space for small appliances.



he'd fallen in love with while attending the University of Edinburgh; Simpson hoped for an ideal place to indulge her love of rolling out swaths of pastry dough, along with a perfect kitchen-window seat for her mother to curl up in with the grandkids.

Thanks to a terraced plan that follows the natural downward slope of the property, the design of the kitchen, located at the back of the house, allows for 12-foot ceilings, creating space for seven-foot-high windows looking into the backyard. A nine-foot-long butcher-block island gives Simpson room to roll; Pashuk also installed a cushioned, L-shaped bench under the window for her mom (and no doubt myriad other kitchen visitors) to enjoy. A salvaged beam from the property's original bungalow acts as support for the kitchen's pendant lights.

Perhaps most strikingly, Pashuk found a way to upend the predictable formality of a long strip of cabinets stretching across a kitchen wall. Instead, the architect designed the reverse-Shaker cupboards to look like an assembly of boxes strapped together at varying levels. "It's playful," says Pashuk, "but it's not a one-liner." *WL*

**H**ow do you live?" It's a

simple question, but an illuminating one for a designer about to create a two-storey home for his clients—and it's always where architect Robert Pashuk starts. To his delight, the answer he received from Calgarians Sara Simpson and John Johnston was a perfect combination of open-ended (leaving Pashuk's firm lots of room for creative innovation) and quirkily specific (providing jumping-off points for a few interesting challenges).

Since family—the couple have two kids, ages seven and 10—and casual entertaining occupy much of their time at home, Simpson told Pashuk they wanted a "modern but playful feel—nothing too serious." (The couple underlined that request by purchasing a vibrant orange Viking range before their new kitchen was designed.) But they were particular too: they wanted windows that would satisfy Johnston's longing for the huge Georgian-period variety