

# WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY

A redone kitchen in Hilltop is modern enough to suit a young family of five while still honoring the home's distinctive prewar vintage.

The Hermès Birkin bag. The 1963 Chevrolet Corvette Stingray Coupe. The Mia Farrow pixie.

We'll add to that list the cathedral window in this 1935 house—something so inherently stylish it has stood the test of time.

And when you've got it, flaunt it.

That was the idea behind the remodel of the once-dated, dark kitchen in the



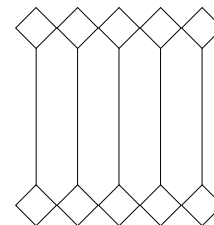
*by Amanda Bonner*  
*photography by Susie Brenner*  
*styling by Elaine St.Louis*











Hilltop home. “That kitchen window was one of the things that sold me on the house,” says Dana Strunk, who bought the home with her husband, Adam, two years ago. “It kind of spoke to me, and I saw so much potential even though the rest of the kitchen wasn’t right.”

Their interior designer, Beth Armijo of Armijo Design Group, felt the same way. “We’re absolutely not changing that window,” she recalls saying. “It’s the focal point.” Though the Strunks and Armijo originally thought about doing a quick cosmetic upgrade, the designer ultimately suggested that they bring in Chris Awadalla of Sanctuary Kitchen Design to make it just right.

“We were thinking that maybe we could just paint the cabinets and add new countertops,” says Adam, “but Beth said, ‘If you are going to do this, I would just redo the whole kitchen.’ And we said, ‘Maybe that’s not a bad idea.’”

Awadalla agreed. “The kitchen was 30 years old, tired, and worn out,” he recalls. “They wanted a fresh start. In the rest of the house, the original character had not been destroyed, but the kitchen felt like a late-’80s, early-’90s kitchen that had been plunked on and didn’t fit.”

Realizing that everything in the design needed to be based off the window, Awadalla went to work. One of the first decisions was to drop any cabinetry around the cathedral-shaped window and instead install minimal open wood

**GATHER 'ROUND** Dana, who got inspiration from kitchen ideas she discovered on Pinterest as well as the designs of Joanna Gaines of *Fixer Upper*, preps orange slices for her two older kids, Wyatt and Greta. The kitchen, she says, turned out even better than she and Adam had hoped.



**WHITE ON WHITE** Chris Awadalla of Sanctuary Kitchen Design repeated the white weathered brick, aged-looking wooden shelves, and white countertops in the kitchen's bar area.





# "THE WINDOW SPOKE TO ME, AND I SAW SO MUCH POTENTIAL EVEN THOUGH THE REST OF THE KITCHEN WASN'T RIGHT." -HOMEOWNER

DANA STRUNK



shelving from Barns2Home, with steel brackets from Brown Wood Inc. That worked for two reasons: "Wall cabinets that wrapped around would have choked the window; that wall would have been too busy," says Awadalla. "And I realized that there was enough storage elsewhere in the kitchen," including a floor-to-ceiling pantry and a bar area that he designed into the wall opposite the window. Second, the rough-wood shelves brought needed warmth to the predominantly white kitchen.

It also matched the wood-topped island from Heartwood Carpentry, which was one of Dana's priorities. "My parents have a similar island, and I love it," says Dana, who works in the oil and gas business (she's a geologist; Adam is an engineer in the same industry). "We told Chris at the start that we wanted

a white, gray, and black color scheme in the kitchen, with wood accents, and that's what we got—the bottom of the island is painted a classic bluish-gray, and the refinished floors are oak."

Besides, says Awadalla, "Adding the rich wood top to the bluish cabinetry makes it feel more like a furniture piece than a kitchen island, which I like. The top is a two-and-a-half-inch-thick edge-grain walnut with a Rubio finish, which is used on floors and furniture. It gives the top a really rich, matte finish. And the great thing about a Rubio finish is that, if you damage the top, we can just sand the area a little, refinish it and it will blend right in with the rest of the wood."

Still, a wooden top on a busy family's kitchen island? "Anyone who puts a wood top on their island knows that it's not going to be as durable as a stone

countertop," Awadalla says. "You can't set a pot of water on this, and you can't chop vegetables directly on it without leaving a score mark. It will probably show some character after a year. But it's like Carrara marble; if you put Carrara in a kitchen, you know it's going to show some age—scratches and stains—after a year."

Around the window, Awadalla designed in a glazed white brick backsplash (from Decorative Materials) with charcoal-gray grout to play off the window's leaded glass. "To me, this house feels almost French country, and the glazed brick has an old-world, European feel to it," he says. "We looked at two or three options for the tile, but when we saw this one, we knew it was perfect. It's just a really clean, classic look." Adding to the sense of cohesion is the metal stove hood, custom made by Raw Urth in Fort Collins to specifically match the lead in the windows, and the simple but elegant Odyssey White Dolomite countertops from The Stone Collection.

For cabinet doors, Awadalla chose a simple Ogee profile from Greenfield Cabinetry in a warm Cameo White, with hardware by Top Knobs in a polished nickel finish. "I like that door style because we can make it look pretty modern or really traditional based on the center panel and what kind of hardware we use," he says. "To me, the cabinets are just one piece of the puzzle, and they are a complementary player to the countertops, backsplash, and Thermador appliances. They all fit together, and the entire look is right for the house."

Today the kitchen acts as an epicenter of the family-friendly but sophisticated home, with the kids—Greta, 6; Wyatt, 4; and Augie, 2—sitting around the island playing while their parents prep dishes and cook. "I smile whenever I walk into the kitchen," says Dana. "I love it so much." **DLM**