

IT TAKES TWO

Suzanne Dimma and her husband, designer Arriz Hassam, merged their distinct styles to create a kitchen that's the heart of their home.

Text by STACY LEE KONG | Photography by ANGUS FERGUSSON

BIDE YOUR TIME

Suzanne Dimma and Arriz Hassam approached their kitchen renovation in phases. This way, they could really analyze what they needed from the space, and plan accordingly. **island design**, Arriz + Co.; **island fabrication**, Custom Mobilia; **island painting**, David Bermann; **runner**, Royal Antique Rugs; **wall colour**, Cloud White (CC-40), Benjamin Moore.

LEAVE ROOM FOR DISPLAY

The original plan was to run the new uppers across the entire wall, but Suzanne realized that would make the kitchen feel a little too stark, so a section of open shelving backed with marble was added at the 11th hour. The collected treasures displayed here, along with the warm gold sconce on the neighbouring wall, give the kitchen a rich, layered feel. **Cabinet interiors, Ikea; cabinet doors, Mar-Tec Woodworking; pulls, Rocky Mountain Hardware; crocks, Addison's; brass tray, brass bowl, Crate & Barrel; brass canister, low white vase, Cynthia Findlay Antiques; white bowl, Snob.**



A panelled dishwasher is seamlessly integrated into the cabinetry

When **H&H** editor-in-chief **Suzanne Dimma** and her husband, designer Arriz Hassam, bought their charming downtown Toronto Victorian, it had a lot of potential — and needed a lot of work. Almost nothing about the dated country kitchen fit the couple's style, but their budget wouldn't cover a total renovation. Instead, they made a few immediate and high-impact changes: the kitchen was opened up to the dining and living rooms, the cherry upper cabinets were removed, laminate countertops were replaced with industrial stainless steel, and Arriz designed a showstopping island with a waterfall-style Statuario marble counter.

Eight years later, it was time to take the design up a notch. The appliances were upgraded, the now-tired lower cabinetry was replaced, and everything else was perfectly tailored to their needs. Here are his and her takes on how they created a kitchen that reflects their trad-meets-mod aesthetic — and that finally fits their life.

THE BEFORES

Look how far it's come!
The original kitchen was dark, dated and dysfunctional.



OUTDATED LOOK In the home's original kitchen, tired butter-yellow walls and inadequate lighting made the entire room feel bleak. Old white appliances were too small and awkwardly located, and the room was closed off from the rest of the house, which meant it got very little natural light.



OH CHERRY, CHERRY In keeping with its country style, the original kitchen featured an abundance of red cherry cabinets. They were well-made, but their style was seriously old-school. "I would have to get down on the floor to reach a pot at the back of the cabinet," Suzanne says. "The new drawers have saved my knees!"



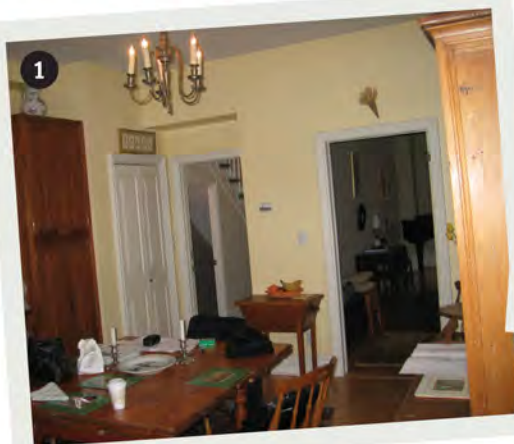
He Said, *She Said* ON NATURAL VS. PAINTED WOOD

ARRIZ: I like natural wood in the kitchen. It adds warmth and ages well. Paint tends to chip and look tired, but wood acquires a beautiful patina.

SUZANNE: I really wanted painted cabinetry throughout the kitchen, but we agreed on a mix of wooden lower cabinets and painted uppers. It took me a long time to accept that the whole kitchen wouldn't be that lovely soft grey. It's a gorgeous colour, but on everything it would have been a bit predictable. Somehow, the wood has so much more personality. In the end, I'm glad we went with a combination.

< MIX MATERIALS Suzanne and Arriz both wanted to keep their supercomfortable barstools — designed by 3rd Uncle Design — so the walnut seats helped direct the new palette. The resulting combination of painted uppers, walnut lower cabinets and Statuario marble makes the room feel layered and polished, and imbues it with a sense of history. **Countertops, backsplash, Ciot; faucet, Dornbracht; sink, Blanco; rugs, Royal Antique Rugs; cabinet colour, Shaded White (201), Farrow & Ball; tiles (on island), Ann Sacks.**

THE BEFORES



1. OPEN SESAME Small, mismatched doorways made the kitchen feel boxed in. They were widened and opened up to improve the flow and maximize sight lines.

2. WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY Low-hung paper blinds looked flimsy and cut the large windows in half, making them feel like transoms. New roman blinds hang from the top of each window, letting in more light and accentuating their size.

He Said, *She Said*

ON STAINLESS STEEL VS. MARBLE

SUZANNE: In the first phase of changes, we replaced the laminate counter with stainless steel, which Arriz really liked for its industrial vibe and because it's so hardworking. When I first suggested upgrading to marble, he didn't want to do it! He thought it would impact the way he cooks, and he was worried about stains. But marble has been the go-to material for bistro kitchens for years, and a few stains can actually give it character.

ARRIZ: I like things that are very functional. Once you go to a marble, it changes everything — it's very presentable, but you have to know how to treat it. It affects your style of cooking. But as it turns out, it totally works for us. I think that's an example of how our different strengths came together. Suzanne finds materials she loves — like the artisanal Rocky Mountain Hardware pulls, for example — and that impacts the design. Now, the kitchen has several elements and layers. It makes the whole thing richer.



<VARY CABINETS STYLES

Combining classic Shaker uppers in a painted finish with bevelled-edge walnut lower cabinets is visually stimulating. The uppers have no hardware for a clean, modern look. Arriz loves to cook, so they splurged on a high-performing Wolf stove and Liebherr fridge. **Appliances**, Euro-Line.



A charming print purchased in Mexico adds character

> MAKE THE ISLAND TAKE CENTRE STAGE

The island was designed so the waterfall sides float off the ground, giving it a light effect. The marble also unifies the different finishes in the space — the island's built-in drawers (they were originally cherry, too!) and the upper cabinets were painted a soft grey that was pulled from its veining. Drawers add tons of storage, while the island's location takes advantage of open sight lines to the living room in the front of the house and the dining room and backyard in the rear. "We eat here, we work here, we basically live here!" Arriz says. **Pendant lights**, Oliver Yaphe; **brass bowl**, Crate & Barrel; **ceramic bowl**, Elte; roman blind **fabric**, Y&Co; roman blind **sewing**, Tonic Living. ABOVE: **Bowls**, Greentea Design; **brass tray**, Crate & Barrel; **truffle oil**, Whole Foods Market; **salt pinch dish**, Snob.



MAKEOVER

MAKE YOUR CONSTRAINTS WORK FOR YOU >

An awkwardly located vent meant the fridge and pantry could sit flush against the wall, but the narrow strip between the two couldn't. Arriz found a fun solution to fill in that space: a wine rack, complete with hidden grooves for the bottles to sit in so they don't roll around.

Pantry millwork, Mar-Tec Woodworking.



FINE DETAILS

Four steps to a more functional kitchen.



1. Arriz didn't want to highlight the range hood because he felt it would overpower the modestly sized kitchen, so he hid it behind a cabinet door that was lined with stainless steel to protect the wood. **2.** The previous cabinets had fixed shelves, but now dishes are better organized in deep drawers. **Dinner plates, salad plates, bowls, Crate & Barrel; blue-patterned plates, Greentea Design; green-patterned plates, Williams-Sonoma.** **3.** Beside the stove, two narrow cutlery drawers were replaced with one wide drawer, giving a full view of all utensils and serveware. **Measuring cups, Addison's; measuring spoons, La Merceria.** **4.** No more ingredients languishing at the back of a shelf — the customized pantry features pullout shelves, so the chefs can see everything. **Dry goods, Whole Foods Market.**



< INCLUDE FURNITURE-LIKE DETAILS

Since the kitchen is so open, Suzanne and Arriz wanted it to feel like an extension of the ground-floor living spaces. The cabinet interiors are from Ikea and are extremely hardworking, but Suzanne and Arriz designed custom doors with elements that evoke a well-made credenza, like standout hardware and bevelled-edge detailing. They also pick up on the traditional recessed panelling underneath the staircase, which was added during this reno. **Fabric (in frame) by Porter Teleo, Primavera; frame, Cleartech.**