

RESTAURANT REVIEW: SUGO | KITCHENS GO DARK | AUTISM'S CHILD

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that can be done?

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how to go dark

Thinking about choosing dark wood cabinets? Here are some pointers from local designers.

- >> Don't be afraid to mix dark cabinets with others that are white or beige.
- >> Go for contrast with light-colored countertops, such as white marble.
- >> Choose reflective finishes, such as glass tiles, white ceramic or stainless steel for the backsplash.

- >> Select frosted glass upper doors to offset dark woods and stains.
- >> Make sure the cabinet wood doesn't match the floors.
- >> Consider installing floor-to-ceiling windows or glass doors adjacent to the kitchen.
- >> Use a skylight to help bring light into the space.

—Nigel F. Maynard



The Caudrons mixed light cabinets with dark for their Bethesda kitchen, getting the best of both worlds.



From left: Will, 14, Emma, 6, Ben, 12, and Ryan, 8, hang out in the kitchen with their mother, Melanie, a local singer.

mix & match

In her spare time, Melanie Caudron sings with the Irish rock band 40 Thieves at local bars such as Flanagan's Harp & Fiddle in Bethesda. Otherwise, she leads a busy life shuttling her four children to activities and hosting get-togethers or dinner parties in her 1987 Williamsburg colonial home in Potomac.

"We live in a very social neighborhood where people get together at the last minute, and we offer our house for that," she says. "My husband's family also lives around here, so when we have dinner, which is quite frequently, the smallest number we have is 20."

Thanks to a renovation in 2011, Melanie and her husband, Tristan, a financial adviser, now have a light-filled kitchen with great flow and strong connection to the adjacent rooms and the backyard.

The previous kitchen "wasn't really a bad kitchen, but it was 20 years old," Melanie says. "It actually had dark cabinets, but the problem was that it also *felt* dark. The kitchen was on the back of the house near lots of windows, but there was a sunroom in front with a three-quarter wall that mostly blocked the natural light, so everything just felt brown."

The kitchen also had disjointed counters and an awkward bar space, and it lacked a pantry. "There were a bunch of little problems that add up when you're running around with four kids," Melanie says.

The couple was clear on the necessary fixes to the kitchen—part of a larger renovation by Bethesda-based Fox Architects—but they were conflicted about the cabinet selection.

"I've always loved white kitchens, and I wanted one, but

I also wanted to be practical," Melanie says. "A full white kitchen would be difficult with the kids. Plus, I love the newer dark woods that you're seeing in kitchens now."

Enter Nadia Subaran of Bethesda-based Aidan Design. "A strategy that works in this project is to limit the dark to the island and surround the space with white, which keeps the perimeters light," Subaran says. "We also went light with the countertops, and did glass tile and stainless-steel appliances, which are light and reflective."

Subaran says the dark cabinetry works best on an island with seating because it will hide the dirt and smudges. Plus, "a dark island really holds the space, and when topped with a lighter countertop offers great contrast," she says.

The dark and white cabinetry meld by using the same styles—a recessed square in dark lager on cherry and alpine white.

The new kitchen feels bright thanks to a reconfigured floor plan with direct access to the backyard and well-placed windows above the eat-in breakfast nook. Pendants over the island and cove lighting in the barrel ceiling over the dining area provide additional illumination.

"If a kitchen can make your life run more smoothly, that's what ours does," Melanie says. "Having things in the right place—with the right kind of storage and with lots of natural light—brings an element of calm to our version of Grand Central Station. And it doesn't hurt that it's pretty, too." ■

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