

Aileen and **Mike Brown** have a hectic work schedule and a busy family life. Both kitchen designers at family-owned **Paragon Kitchens** in Guelph, they had a very clear vision for renovating the home they purchased in 2015.

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A bold black-and-white scheme with warm wood accents makes minimalism an approachable concept for this family home.

Modern love

STORY **MERRILYN PATTERSON**
PHOTOGRAPHY **JASON HARTOG**



ABOVE: Panoramic views from geometrically-shaped windows add light and warmth to the family room in all seasons. The modern, three-sided gas fireplace from Buckenham Fireplaces and Grills Inc. is clad in soft grey rift-cut oak panelling by Paragon. **RIGHT:** An airy floating staircase divides the kitchen and dining areas. The glass wall provides safety and helps flood the main floor with natural light.



The couple knew the house would need a total transformation from the inside out. It was built in the 1960s in a classic, red-brick colonial style. They chose a white plaster exterior and paired it with black steel accents to match their modern vision.

In this young, active family, the kitchen is the hub of the home – so where to put it for maximum flow and efficient use of space? The original design was a centre hall plan that chopped the house up into four compartments with the kitchen at the back of the house. The staircase was moved to accommodate a generous open concept kitchen/dining area and to allow the kitchen to be star of the show. Such a large endeavour meant a year-long renovation.

The large island features a four-foot Galley Workstation. Self-confessed foodies, this enlarged sink allows the couple to chop, prepare and serve food altogether. Given their experience as kitchen designers, they focused their expertise on creating their own elegant, modern and ultra-efficient kitchen.

They chose engineered materials that can withstand the rigours of family life. The kitchen cabinet finish is made of Fenix, an Italian laminate featuring nanotechnology that gives it scratch, stain and heat-resistant properties.

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The dining room, open to the kitchen, is a bright space where easy-care plants like succulents and a fiddle-leaf fig thrive.



TOP LEFT: The elegant and modern spa-like master en suite is open concept. **TOP RIGHT:** Cambria quartz graces the shower walls. **ABOVE:** The master bedroom is on the main floor, with a walkout to the forest-like backyard.



Most of the cabinetry is a matte black, which grounds the space, but as Aileen explains, “it is the ultimate neutral.” Upper cabinets with a glossy wood finish add a shiny counterpoint to all the matte materials. Overall, there are minimal upper cabinets and loads of drawers.

Compact, German-made Gaggenau appliances were chosen for quality, efficiency and a streamlined look. Mike says “the European attitude is to cut out the frills to make it better and keep it longer.” One of his favourite features in the kitchen is the retractable visor hood that provides a compromise for the different cooks.

The floors throughout the house are wire-brushed, engineered, oiled white oak.

The floating staircase was designed by the couple with a light, airy feel in mind. Exterior doors are black but the couple decided that repeating the colour on the interior doors was “too cold.” They opted to paint the interior doors a warm grey with grey trim. European-style, tilt-and-turn windows are a nod to functional design. Elegant and durable Cambria quartz tops every counter and even lines shower walls as the couple wanted minimal cleaning associated with grouts and other porous surfaces. *Continued on page 38*

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feature



ABOVE: Soft and pretty, this bedroom is fit for a princess. **FAR RIGHT:** Durable materials were used for permanent finishes, like the countertop and the vanities. **RIGHT:** A vintage cane chair that was left by the previous owner doubles as a night stand. **BELOW:** The upstairs hallway is a play space for the girls now, but will act as a cool hangout for teenagers in the future.



For storage, the couple eschewed traditional closets. “Walk-in closets take up too much space with door jambs and excessive walking space,” says Mike. As cabinet people, we believe in efficiency. We can create more efficient storage in less square footage using cabinet materials.” The mudroom is designed to hide family clutter with a drawer for each family member and open shoe cubbies. In the master bedroom, there are cabinets for hanging clothes and instead of a walk-in closet, there’s room for an efficient laundry nook.

This modern home is full of smart features. Alexa can be accessed from all corners of the house, controlling settings for window coverings, lighting, heat and air conditioning.

The second floor has been designed entirely for the couple’s daughters. They have a bedroom each with recessed space for clothing, and a double vanity bathroom that they share. As in the master suite, there’s a water closet for privacy. The loft-like area by the stairs is a cool place to play right now and in the future will be a great place for teenagers to hang out.

The year-long renovation came to an end and the result is a family-centric, minimalist, warm, modern home that the Brown family will enjoy for years to come. **OH**

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