

Designer: Miwa Yamamuro, Muro Designs

# MORE FOR LESS

The sun now shines on this budget remodel

BY RON DONOHO

**STAYING WITHIN A BUDGET** was a motivational factor in the design of Arturo Jordan's University Heights kitchen. That attention to cost helped designer Miwa Yamamuro of San Diego's Muro Designs win the Under \$25,000 category of our Kitchens of the Year competition.

"The homeowner wanted to update the look and functionality of the kitchen, but didn't want to completely redo it since he doesn't plan to live there for the long term," says Yamamuro. "He didn't want to invest too much into a home he is planning to rent or sell in the near future."

The biggest challenge was the small space — the kitchen is 85 square feet and the dining area is 68 square feet.

"I worked on making it feel more open and on getting more light into the area," says Yamamuro.

One way to improve the lighting in both the kitchen and dining area was to remove one of the existing cabinets, which was blocking sunlight from coming in through the window.

"In the kitchen, I changed the existing lighting fixtures to recessed lights, to keep the space clean and open," says Yamamuro. "And the addition of a chandelier in the dining area helped the lighting situation and added a warm and welcoming feeling."

Other components of the remodel included removing the acoustic ceiling, repainting existing cabinets and installing new handles, installing a new dishwasher, sink and faucet, and removing the countertop and replacing it with granite.

Since the overall design was contemporary style in neutral colors, Yamamuro decided to add some fun with the backsplash. "I chose two different tones of gray tiles to make a pattern and give it some visual flair."

To stay within budget (the actual final cost was \$16,300), Yamamuro did a lot of comparison-price shopping.

"I shopped around town and online," she says. "I did a lot of research to find low-priced tile [\$400 for this job], appliances, drawer pulls and lighting. The contractor [Samuel Diaz] was also a great resource to find local vendors that had what I was looking for."

"This kitchen got an amazing bang for the buck," says Kitchens of the Year judge Margo Porras, designer at Mima Design Studio. "Good materials and more light — even though so many elements were added." ♦

Opening the space for better lighting, on a set budget, was a key goal in the remodel of this University Heights Kitchen.