

# BACK AT THE RANCH

## Mid-century Renovations



Before Renovation

Photographs courtesy of HAVEN design + building

In recent decades, designers and homebuyers have danced the two-step to renovate old New England farmhouses or turn-of-the-century Victorian painted ladies and they have largely ignored plain Janes and wallflowers: ranch houses. However, as the last century turned, downsizing empty nesters, young singles and couples, and urbane mid-century design aficionados have given these wallflowers more than just a second look. They have given them a much-needed makeover and have transformed them with remarkably sophisticated and surprising results.



This particular ranch house renovation was undertaken by Haven design+building of Richmond, with warm and simply elegant results.

The small kitchen in this typical ranch-style house was most in need of an update. Additionally, the homeowners wanted to add an informal dining area and gain space for a family room by enclosing an existing screen porch. The hip-roofed dining area pop-out was added by cantilevering it off the existing south wall. Because of the sloped site, the kitchen on the back of the house is actually on a second level. To avoid disturbing an existing ground level deck below, the use of the cantilevered construction technique cleverly opened up the space and brought lots of light while economizing on construction costs. Relocating a coat closet and opening up and enclosing a summer porch expanded the space further.

The kitchen, though short on space, was designed to optimize functionality. A local custom cabinetmaker used Vermont-harvested birch with an eco-friendly water-based finish and the design puts every inch of space to work with lots of built-in cabinet storage features. By necessity, the kitchen also incorporates a laundry area. Hidden behind cabinet doors there is a simple space-saving stacking washer/dryer as well as an ample laundry folding and supply area. The sink window was enlarged and brought to counter level in order to bring in additional light and capitalize on the mountain views. A small island gives additional workspace and seating for an occasional guest, and leaves plenty of room for circulation and laundry. Raising the dishwasher improved accessibility for loading dishes, while the counter-depth French door refrigerator made access easy without requiring too much space. The space-saving convection microwave above the grill-range doubles as a second oven for holiday cooking. Frosted glass cabinet doors create dimension and textural interest above a serving counter. Everyday kitchen office functions such as phone, mail, laptop, and calendar are incorporated into its own area, freeing counter space. Improved task and ambient lighting make for good and flexible working areas.

As the father of American modern architecture, Louis Sullivan said, "Form ever follows function," but as both he and his student, Frank Lloyd Wright, demonstrated, it should be like nature and be beautiful too. Welcome the ranch house revolution. It's time to take a second look. 🌿

Before



After

