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Paradise in Plymouth

How Heidi Heiland transformed her yard into a slice of Eden



Party Planning 101

Tips and tricks from local pro Patty Sachs

How (and where) to kayak in Plymouth



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The finished product. OPPOSITE PAGE: Susan and Kevin Gulden discuss their options in their old, outdated space.

A (Modern) Little House on the Prairie

The Guldens' kitchen revamp creates a country-like getaway without the drive.

SUBURBIA GETS A BAD RAP FOR MASS-PRODUCED HOUSES AND CARBON-COPY NEIGHBORHOODS. Where's the personality, the differentiation in design? One Plymouth family found those answers and more in their quest for a newly designed kitchen, one that was more functional for their house. "We had been in the house since 1993, and our home was more of a cookie-cutter house," says Susan Gulden who, with her husband Kevin, sought a complete remodel on their entire kitchen. Dated in style, cramped space-wise and offering little room for conversation, the Guldens knew something needed to change.

The Personality

They centered on a design inspiration of a piece of Stickley furniture—a popular style, simple in design, and closely related to the American Arts and Crafts movement. Rather than going it alone, the Guldens hired local firm Orfield Design & Construction Inc., led by Laura Orfield-Skrivseth, one of the leading home designers and builders in the Plymouth area. "When we met with the Guldens, they were looking for a way to kind of get out of the way of the original home build-style kitchen, which was small in comparison to the rest of the home. They wanted to make things more modern and personalize their home," Orfield-Skrivseth says.



Orfield Design & Construction Inc.
9805 Oak Ridge Tr.,
Minnetonka
952.920.6543
orfielddesign.com



The richly stained handmade cabinetry, combined with timeless drawer pulls, a wine nook for storing vintages, along with beautiful Craftsman-style windows, transformed the kitchen into an oasis for cooking and conversation. “I wanted to have something that was going to be really warm and cozy, that when people came over and sat at the island they felt like they were at a resort,” says Gulden.

The Differentiation

In addition, Orfield-Skrivseth and co-owner Ron Orfield built barrel arches to add an extra design element, flowing the feel of the kitchen into other rooms in the house. “The barrel arches are a huge thing that the pictures don’t always show. Those were designed to create little niches for art and bookcases between the formal living room and sitting area,” Orfield says. Then there’s the one design risk that paid off big-time. “We actually have a couch in our kitchen at one end,” Kevin Gulden says. “Someone can be at the island having coffee talking to someone on the couch. We really like the feature, even if it’s rather unconventional. We utilize the whole house more.”

Natural light was another big change for the Guldens’ previously boxed-in kitchen. “We’re glad they added three windows at the end of the kitchen that are kind of Mission/Prairie style,” Susan Gulden says. “They let in a lot of morning light on that side of the house that the kitchen never had before.”

While hiring a design firm was the only way the Guldens would go, they still felt that they had a hand in every step of the project, given the liberty they were afforded by Orfield. “We got to make more decisions than we thought we would, so in a way we can say we designed it ourselves,” Kevin Gulden says. //