

Waterfront Jewel

Tuscan-inspired kitchen
takes advantage of its prime location

By Lee Rhodes ■ Photos by Jim McGuire

Lakeside living generally translates into sun-drenched days of boating, fishing and jet skiing. In the case of Matt and Crystal Creasser, it also inspires room renovations whose end results mirror the radiance and relaxed atmosphere of the lake itself. The Creassers' home on beautiful Lake Wylie boasts a newly remodeled living room, dining room and kitchen, and the latter sparkles with comfort, beauty and waterfront views visible from every angle.

When the Creassers built their home along the northeast shore of Lake Wylie three years ago, they initially opted for a neutral color palette while they mulled over a direction in which to take their design vision. Today, they enjoy every meal in a stunning room that exudes equal parts Mediterranean and Italian charm.

continued >



Views from every angle

She's especially pleased with the kitchen's revised floor plan, which expanded the working triangle and shifted the sink and stove into more logical locations. Like most people, Crystal spends more time at the sink than the stove. As a result of the reconfiguration, she'll spend more time facing the welcoming warmth of the kitchen and its activity, and less time with her back to it.

The couple also removed a single window, which previously rested where a dramatic backsplash resides now. Given the home's abundance of windows, the difference was negligible, and the net result is an extremely open layout, which draws kitchen, living room, dining room and even part of the upstairs together into one large, gracious space.

continued >



A personal design

The Creassers found inspiration in the unique granite and marble countertops and the specialty ceramic and porcelain tiles found at Tile Collection, a Charlotte-based granite and marble company that Matt and his mother, Elaine Creasser, own. Matt's insider knowledge played a role in the couple's selection of the handsome beige porcelain tile, which comprises the flooring, as well as the kitchen's exotic granite countertops.

"Matt had a vision of what tile he wanted to use for the floor," says Crystal. "And I had an idea of how I wanted the overall style to look. We pretty much have the same tastes and it's not really hard to come to a design that we both compromise on."

It's a good thing, since the couple acted as their own designers. Yet Matt's business background, combined with Crystal's long-time interest in design, made this kitchen transformation a cinch. "I work as a nurse but I have a degree in design also, so this was my fun project," says Crystal.



Another priority in the redesign was the need to make the stove area more visually stimulating. The couple's incorporation of a brown glaze into that area, as well as distinctive wood accents, added a new degree of character and depth.

A colorful backdrop

The kitchen's overall look resembles a Tuscan villa, from the natural stone appearance and distressed edges of the flooring to the elegant stone look that distinguishes the pendant lights. The pendants grace the area above the bar and complement the expansive 20x20-inch floor tiles, and a backsplash of travertine-tumbled limestone with stainless steel accents completes the look.

For the cabinetry, the couple selected a glazed look, preferring its striking beauty to a flat matte finish. The countertops are equally unique for their bluish specks, and Crystal comments that both she and Matt were immediately drawn to the granite's iridescent blue flecks and chocolate-brown background. "When the sun hits certain areas of the granite, bright blue pieces pop out at you," explains Crystal. "You don't see it all at once until light hits certain areas."

Yet the Creassers craved still more color for their Tuscan eatery, so they added a sun-washed, clay-colored wall covering, festive place settings, and brightly colored decorative canisters. "The canisters add to the Italian look," says Crystal. "I chose them to save space on top of cabinets and to bring more color into the kitchen."

continued >

In addition to the natural light that floods the kitchen each day, the clay-colored, faux painted walls bring warmth to the space.



The limestone backsplash above the range is accented with stainless steel tile to complement the surrounding appliances.

Right: The view of Lake Wylie as seen from the deck off the back of Crystal and Matt's home.



The canisters, along with the tropical-inspired bar stools, work nicely to offset the soft neutrality of the cabinetry and the minimum amount of painted wall space. Natural sunlight drenches the entire area.

The kitchen gathers additional warmth from the wealth of palm trees and other tropical plants that greet all who enter. "My husband does a lot of research into palm trees. He knows which live indoors and which live outdoors," says Crystal. "So he keeps them alive."

Mingled within this lush paradise are a host of high-end appliances. From the Bosch dishwasher to the Thermador oven and cooktop to the GE Profile refrigerator, all are stainless steel and top-of-the-line in terms of performance and versatility.

When questioned about her favorite part of the kitchen, Crystal doesn't hesitate with her answer. "The breakfast area," she says. "We're able to enjoy breakfast while we look out at the water, and at dinner we enjoy the sunset."

The Creassers eat outside quite often, but even when they don't, their charming lakefront kitchen still gives the impression that they are enjoying meals alfresco. Bon Appetito!

RESOURCES

Builder:

Rodney Holtzmuller

Cabinetry:

Eudy's Cabinets

Flooring:

20x20-inch distressed edge porcelain tile

Countertops:

Mahogany Blue Eyes granite

Backsplash:

Travertine tumbled limestone
with stainless steel accents

Appliances:

Bosch dishwasher; Thermador cooktop
and oven; GE Profile refrigerator

Lighting:

Ancient Stone pin lights by Minka