

Homes

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A Passion for Cappuccino

By giving up some valuable floor space, a Calgary couple gained an invaluable focus for their renovated kitchen

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The little things in life really can make a big difference.

Take, for instance, the perfect cup of cappuccino—and the perfect cappuccino bar. Simone and Ron Gratton added one to their kitchen during a substantial home renovation by interior designer Monica Siebert Kakoschke of MSK Design & Decorating Inc. last fall. It occupies only slightly more space than a free-standing butcher block, yet it commands a double shot of attention and interest.

"We've always spent a lot of time in the kitchen. What Monica has done is make this a spot that people gravitate to even more," says Simone Gratton, a high school principal whose love of Italian brew inspired the coffee bar installation. "For entertaining it's a real treat. I had 15 or 20 staff over one night and I made cappos like 'boom'" she adds, snapping her fingers for emphasis.

While the Grattons have the means for producing vast quantities of cappuccino, Simone limits her passion to one or two cups a day and Ron, unbelievably, never touches the stuff. Still, cappuccino—they never make or consume regular coffee—is a rite in their home. "I come down in the morning and let the dogs out, turn the machine on and have a shower," says Gratton. "By the time I come down again and let the dogs in, the cappo is ready. It's really a ritual for me and has been for years."

The centrepiece of the granite-topped cappuccino bar is an ornate copper and brass Electra coffee maker from Calgary's Izzo Imports, which Gratton says is every bit as fast and eminently more attractive than the department store model it replaced. She jokingly calls the gleaming new appliance and its matching industrial-sized grinder heirlooms for her teenaged children. "They won't want the furniture. They'll fight over this," she gestures, as she brews an iced cappuccino with the Electra.

They'll likely fight over the bar, too, which looks like it could easily be picked up and moved, but—like all the room's ornate cabinetry—is built right



Only slightly larger than a butcher block, the cappo bar commands a double shot of attention

into the Grattons' kitchen in southwest Calgary.

"Everything looks freestanding but it's not. It's all bench-made cabinetry with hand-turned legs," says Siebert Kakoschke of her custom design, which unites a number of large elements and appliances—including a six-burner Thermador range and double-door Sub Zero refrigerator—in a floor plan that measures no more than four metres square.

She describes the renovated, unfitted kitchen as "architecturally correct" and "European-flavored." Gratton says the kitchen now has "better flow" and is able to accommodate several tasks and people at one time because it has distinct work areas for cleaning, cooking, food prep—and of course, making coffee.

To make the most of the space available, Siebert Kakoschke straddled the cappo bar between the kitchen and breakfast nook, borrowing precious space from each area. "In a way there is a little less space and there's a little less square footage of counter space, but it's better organized," says the designer.

Both the cappo bar and the kitchen include a number of memorable details. Intricate, hand-cut gold-leaf Bisazza Oro mosaic tiles, about a centimetre square, are used on the front of the bar and on the oversize, built-in façade covering the range hood. An easy-to-clean stainless steel backsplash with nickel silver finish runs behind the counter of the cappo bar and behind the extra-wide range. The cabinetry, says Siebert Kakoschke, is finished with

Simone and Ron Gratton converge at their cappo bar. The kids won't fight over the furniture—they'll want this, says Simone of the heirloom-quality Electra coffeemaker.



an Old World technique that requires seven separate applications of paint and lacquer (in shades called Havana Cream, Maple Sugar and Flax) and includes a hand-carved scallop and wreath of leaves on the alcove above the fridge. Above the cappo bar a trio of copper tubing, brass wire, and glass bead halogen lights cast a warm welcoming glow.

The bowed front of the cappo bar stands about 1.2 metres high and is finished in Ann Sacks Petite Brick in a vertical subway pattern. The work-surface side is regular counter height and topped with yellow beach granite, into which is fitted a barely-there sink and a Little Butler hot- and cold-water dispenser for cleanup duties. "It's one of those little conveniences that you didn't realize how much you'd need or like until you have it," says Gratton of the now indispensable water dispenser. Underneath the counter, a bank of

drawers holds coffee cups and utensils and a cupboard provides a convenient stash for coffee supplies.

When not in use, all but the largest counter-top appliances—virtually everything except the cappuccino maker and grinder—are removed from sight. A mixer is quickly and neatly stashed on a pop-up stand under a cupboard; the microwave is concealed by cupboard doors. So while the cappo bar and kitchen have a decidedly French Country look, neither have any of the clutter that so often accompanies such decors.

For the Grattons, the kitchen renovation and cappuccino bar addition have been dream-like. "The first night we moved back in the house after the reno I couldn't sleep. I came downstairs, pinched myself, and said 'this is my spot,'" says Gratton.

And, later that morning, she made herself a perfect cappuccino. **F**

