

WISE DOWNSIZE

The Mahwah condo is smaller than its owner's previous ranch home, but — thanks to two savvy designers — no less glamorous.

Text by **Donna Rolando**

Design by **Anthony Albert Studios and CK Design Group**

Photography by **Wing Wong, MemoriesTTL**

For a Bergenite who vacations each year with family in Italy, drinking in the splendor of the Amalfi Coast, location is pivotal and what grounds a home is beauty. So it's no surprise that after owning an Upper Saddle River ranch for 20-plus years, this empty-nester would seek a grand new beginning in a picture-postcard setting. The mother of two grown children, she wanted to downsize, but not compromise. Fortunately, after she purchased a pre-construction condo at

How to achieve the "effortless luxury" a Mahwah homeowner wanted for her kitchen reno? Designers Anthony Passanante and Christy Kohler met the goal with an Italian Calacatta slab marble backsplash, brass lighting and hood, custom white-and-navy cabinets and a quartz-topped peninsula, relocated for entertaining ease.



Mahwah's Rio Vista in 2001 in the unique setting of the former Seton Hall seminary campus, compromise wasn't required.

She arranged for the condo to be gutted in phases, room by room, with the kitchen serving as part of the grand finale in 2019–20. When Anthony Albert Passanante came on board for this phase, she recalls, the goal was "effortless luxury."

Passanante is the certified master kitchen and bath designer who owns Waldwick's Anthony Albert Studios—and an allied member of the American Society of Interior Designers (ASID). "Anthony was the perfect person to carry out this vision," the homeowner says. "He pushed the design boundaries and was not afraid to take risks. The result takes your breath away."

By relocating a peninsula, Passanante created a flow that makes entertaining a snap. Just right for this "world-class hostess," as he describes her, appliances are chef-quality serious: Wolf, Sub-Zero and a satin-nickel Dornbracht faucet.

Drama in this open floor plan is maxed by lighting, especially the hand-rubbed brass sconces and pendants that Passanante says add "another dimension." For the greatest of ease, Lutron gives all the illumination an app.

Every project has a few challenges, and Passanante was faced with working a concrete column into the design. A French cerused oak pilaster, which matches the herringbone floor, is his clever disguise. Resisting the tendency to pack too much into the space was another challenge, but one mastered by keeping it airy, says fellow designer Christy Kohler, owner of Allendale's CK Design Group and another ASID allied member.

While the old kitchen was largely traditional, Kohler says the reno welcomes modern elements such as a hand-picked slab of Italian Calacatta marble for the backsplash. Although Anthony Albert Studios custom-made the cabinets with white above and a needlepoint navy base, the collaborators resisted letting the cabinetry dominate, instead giving 4-x-6 marble tiles free flow to the ceiling. Other highlights are the custom hood in satin brass to wow with warmth and LED-strip floating oak shelves, which display Hermès dinnerware. The new kitchen also showcases hand-painted ceramics created in Italy by a relative.

To boost the glam factor, Kohler used a Phillip Jeffries ivory wallpaper that "actually glistens," she says, and swivel faux leather stools with a metallic shimmer. Glamour enchants the dining area as well, where a needlepoint navy custom bar with a Sub-Zero wine storage and beverage center is accentuated with an églomisé mirror finish, highlighting the Mason-Art sectional just beyond. "We designed it that way purposely to make the apartment feel larger," says Passanante. The custom Art Deco table from Century couples French cerused oak with a Lucite base and is joined by Kravet Georgetown chairs with blue ultra-suede backs and ivory faux-leather seats.

"The home is a beautiful reflection of my mother's elegance, warmth and sophistication," says the owner's daughter, sure that Mom now has what she needs to continue her lifelong tradition of elegant entertaining.

This page, top: Anthony Albert Studios designed the cabinets for plenty of space. Bottom: Floating oak shelves display Hermès dinnerware, while a ceramic plate made in Italy graces the counter. Opposite page: This stylish bar not only keeps wine and drinks Sub-Zero cold, its églomisé mirror finish works to enlarge the space.

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