

FROM THE COVER

Grim to glam

Nik Divakaruni, 32, wanted to freshen up his Pacific Heights bachelor pad for his fiancée, April Worley, 31. The couple love to cook and entertain, so the first thing to gut was the tiny, awkward kitchen. "It was like cooking in a cave," says Divakaruni, a sales executive for a software company. "Actually, a cave would be more spacious."

Their friend, designer Rachel Seldin, came to the rescue with plans for an open, more usable space. They got rid of a huge broom closet and raised the soffit 6 inches to add the feeling of spaciousness. The separate oven and cooktop were hauled out, which expanded the floor space from 36 square feet to 50 square feet. Adding in a three person eat-in counter at the front (with a wine fridge tucked to the side) increased the counter space from 16 square feet to 23 square feet and opened the kitchen to the living room. Now, the couple can chat with their guests while they cook.

Out went the old blond maple floors and painted white cabinetry, and they installed dark walnut cabinets from Home Depot because the "dark color recesses into the wall," says Seldin. A combination microwave hood over the oven and sliding shelves for the pantry saved space. Off-white porcelain and marble and stainless steel tiles from Home Depot added interest.

They chose appliances in brushed steel rather than chrome. "That's how Nik wanted it," says Seldin. "Everything is modest, nothing flashy."

The couple plan to tie the knot in October. "Because we're paying for the wedding, I gave Rachel the cost for the kitchen and bathroom, and she came in \$600 under," says Divakaruni. The total cost of the project was around \$31,000 including design fees and new flooring throughout the apartment and lighting in the living room.

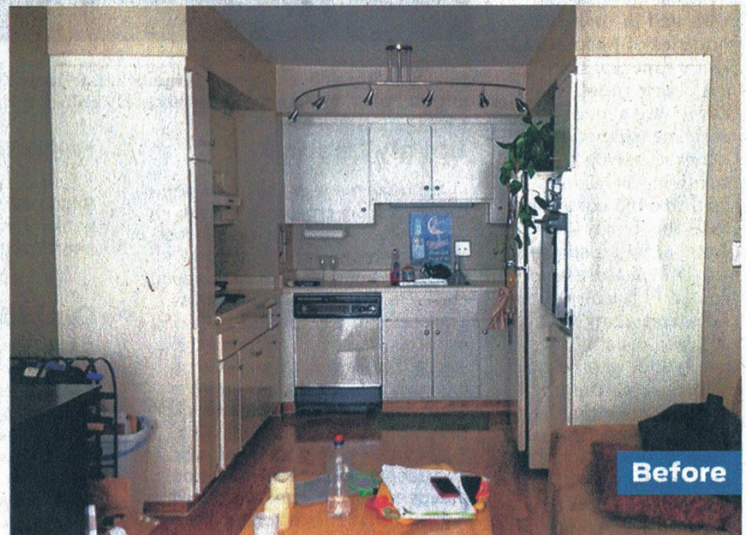
Design: Rachel Seldin.
www.seldindesignstudios.com.



Liz Hafalia / The Chronicle



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Rachel Seldin

Steal some space

Top: Nik Divakaruni wanted to update his small, awkward bachelor pad kitchen, above, for his fiancée April Worley since they both love to cook and entertain. Their friend designer Rachel Seldin opened up the space by getting rid of a broom closet and taking out a separate cooktop and oven. Using Home Depot dark walnut cabinets recesses them into the walls. Off-white porcelain and marble and stainless steel tiles from Home Depot, left, added interest.