

Kitchen Design Kitchen of the Week

### Kitchen of the Week: Bringing Back a Vintage Victorian Vibe

Black-and-white cement tile, mixed cabinet finishes and other period details lend a sense of age to a Chicago row house

**Becky Harris** February 11, 2021  
Houzz Contributor: Hi there! I live in a 1940s cottage in Atlanta that I'd describe as "colle... More

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Walking into this Victorian-era row house in Chicago's Hyde Park neighborhood, you'd swear that the kitchen had evolved over time. However, nothing could be further from the truth. A 1980s renovation had wiped out any of its original vintage charm, and the homeowners wanted it back. So they called the interior designers at KitchenLab to give them the vintage look they longed for. Principal designer Rebekah Zaveloff opened up the space to the dining room, added new windows and a wood-burning fireplace, and selected thoughtful details that make the space fit right in with the home's history.



"After" photos by Michael Alan Kaskef

**Kitchen at a Glance**  
**Who lives here:** Two professors and their daughter  
**Location:** Hyde Park neighborhood of Chicago  
**Size:** 285 square feet (26 square meters)  
**Designer:** Rebekah Zaveloff of KitchenLab Interiors

**Before:** Nothing about the kitchen made it feel like it was in a Victorian-era row house. And it wasn't an inviting space to spend time in. The homeowners, who are professors at the University of Chicago and the parents of a daughter, wanted to remedy that. They also love to entertain and wanted the kitchen to be an inviting place where they would enjoy spending time. Most of all, they love a fireplace and wanted a wood-burning stove or fireplace in their kitchen. "Everyone they asked told them that there was no way to do a fireplace in here, but we love a challenge," Zaveloff says.



**After:** The scope of the remodel included taking the room down to the studs, opening it up to the dining room and adding a wood-burning fireplace and expansive new windows that look onto the backyard. The goal was to create Victorian-era style while updating the space, giving the kitchen the appearance that it had gently evolved over time.

"I like to avoid an L-shaped kitchen when I can, because it means I can mix the finishes on both walls and on an island," Zaveloff says. The upper cabinets are white, the lower cabinets are black and the island is walnut.

Along with the mix of cabinet finishes, an encaustic cement tile floor, walls covered in elongated subway tiles, painted brick, simple pendant lights and traditional hardware give the room a vintage look. "I wanted to use natural, humble materials," Zaveloff says. "The terracotta wall tiles have a very uneven, handmade feel, and the Carrara marble counters have a bakery feel."

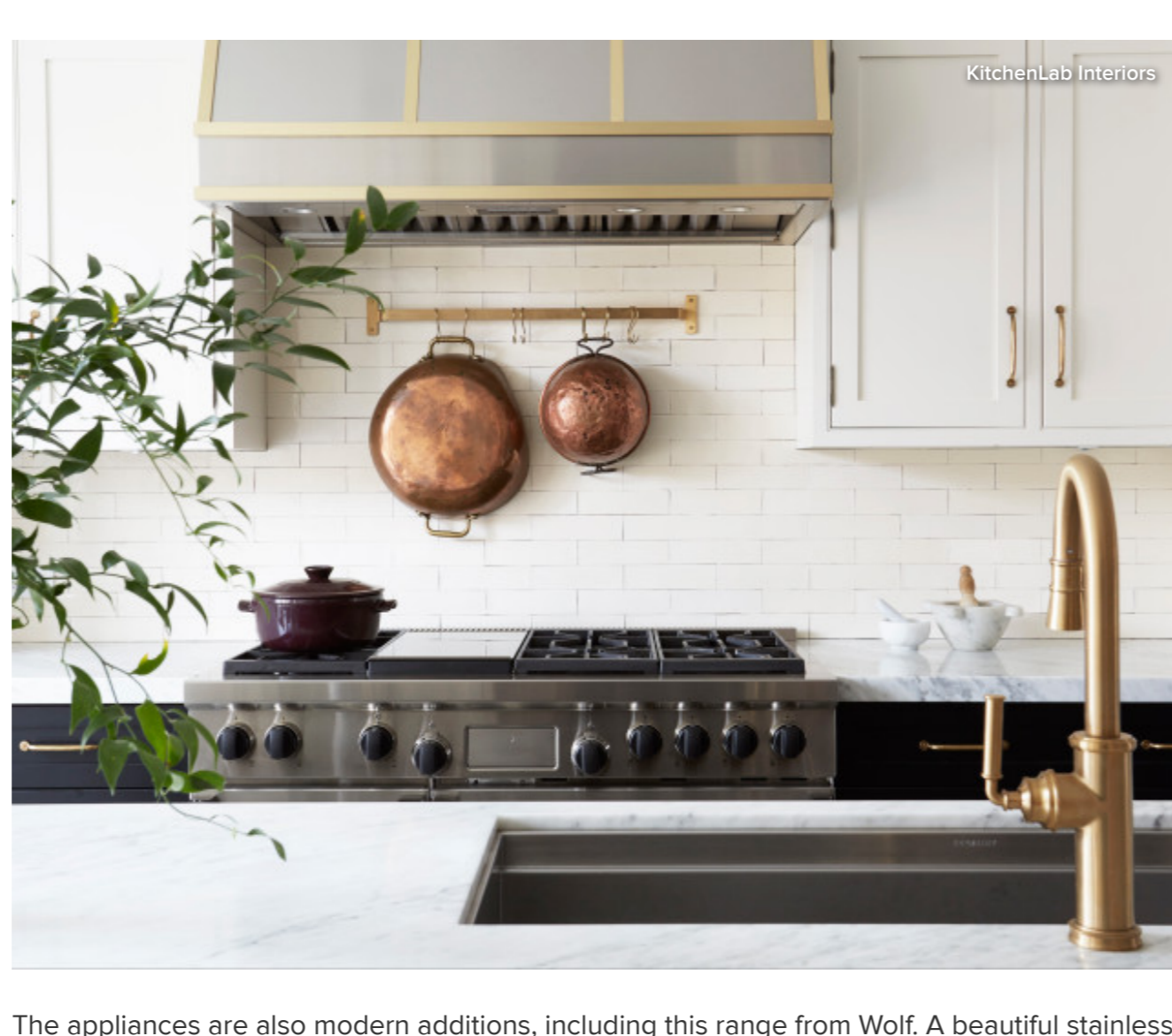
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Working with different walls meant Zaveloff could lose the two-tone scheme on the pantry cabinets opposite the range wall.

A workstation sink makes the kitchen island an efficient prep area. These sinks come with various inserts such as cutting boards and colanders. The brass faucets, ogee-edged marble countertop and glass pendant lights add to the Victorian vibe. Midcentury modern counter stools mix in an element from another era.

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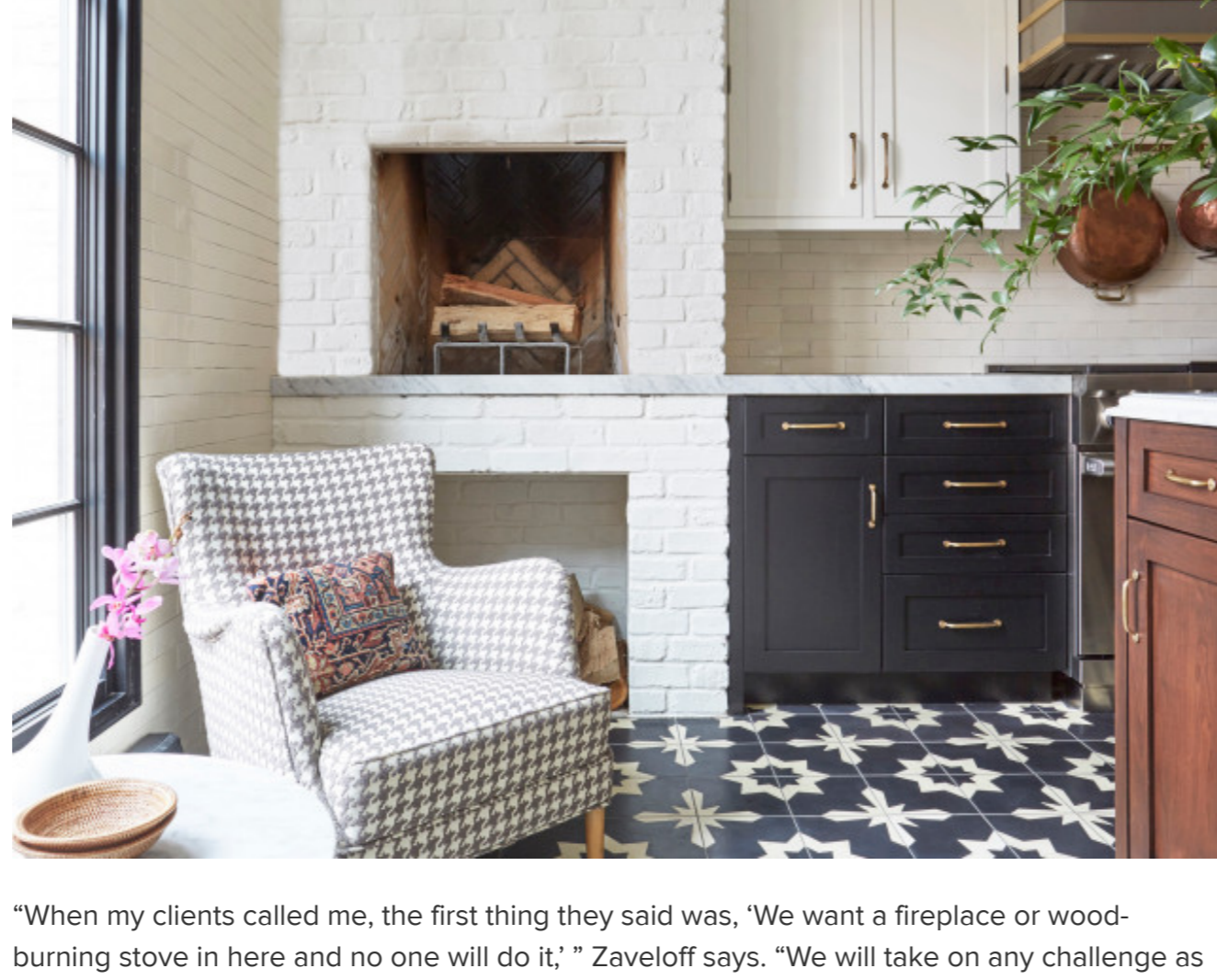


The appliances are also modern additions, including this range from Wolf. A beautiful stainless steel custom hood with brass straps ties the appliances into the design scheme. Zaveloff tucked a new stainless steel fridge into the corner just out of frame on the right. This placement keeps the large appliance from dominating the room.

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The homeowners also had a kitchen sitting area on their wish list. Thanks to three new casement windows, the new sitting area is bathed in light. Two comfortable armchairs and a table create a perfect spot for enjoying coffee and the newspaper in the morning or grading papers in the evening.

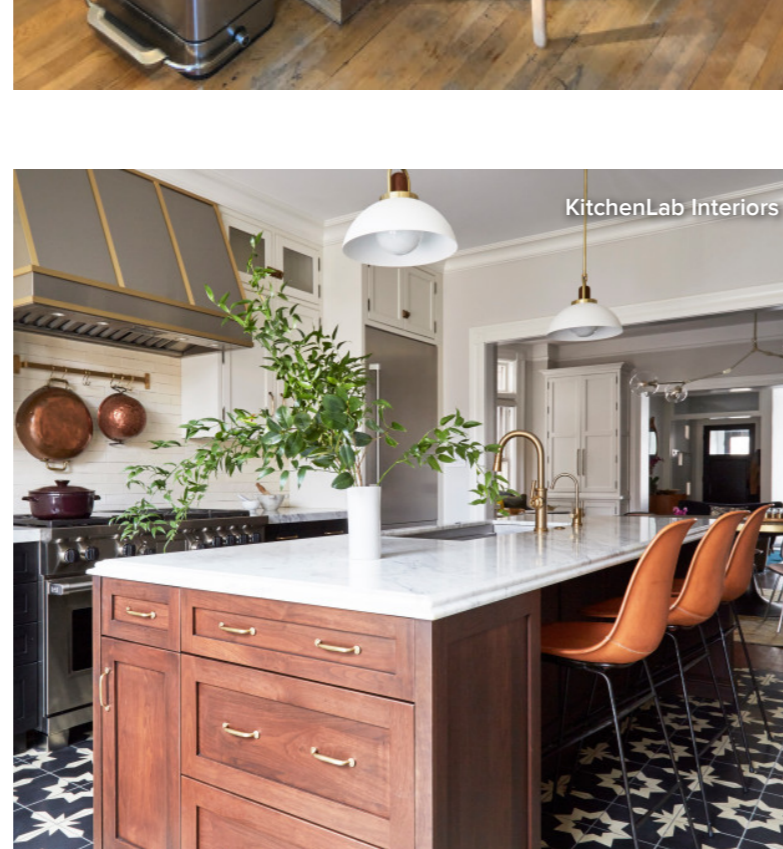


"When my clients called me, the first thing they said was, 'We want a fireplace or wood-burning stove in here and no one will do it,'" Zaveloff says. "We will take on any challenge as long as codes allow for it." History provided an assist, as they found a hole and chase from an old chimney in the wall near this spot during demolition. Zaveloff was able to create a chimney with a new metal chase above the kitchen up to the roof.

Inspired by the placement of wood-fired pizza ovens she'd seen, she placed the fireplace at this height so the homeowners could enjoy the view of the fire from the other end of the room. "This way the island does not block it," she says.



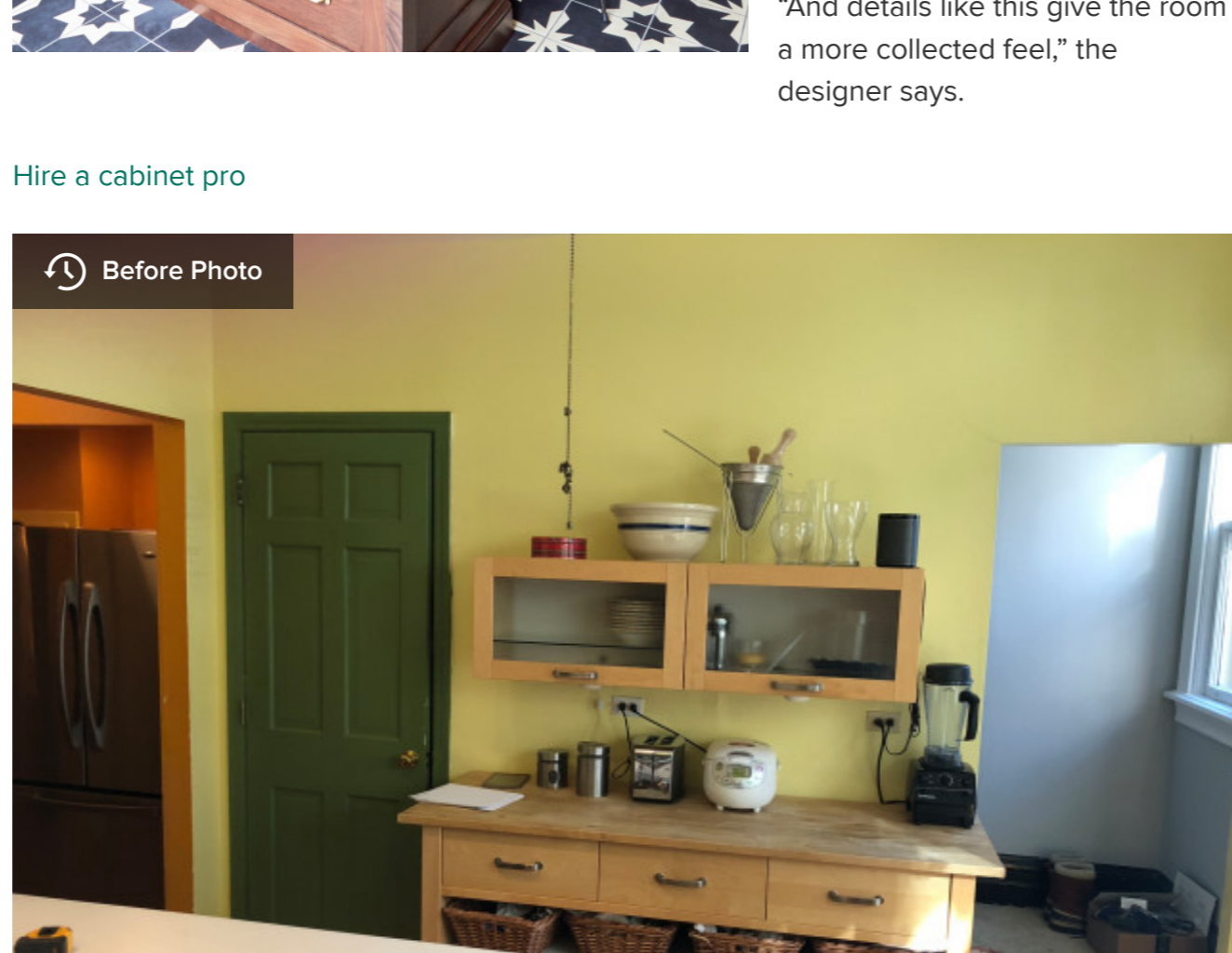
**Before:** Between the kitchen and the dining room was a pantry pass-through area. There was also a powder room in that space. Zaveloff removed the wall, relocated the powder room and incorporated this area into the kitchen's footprint.



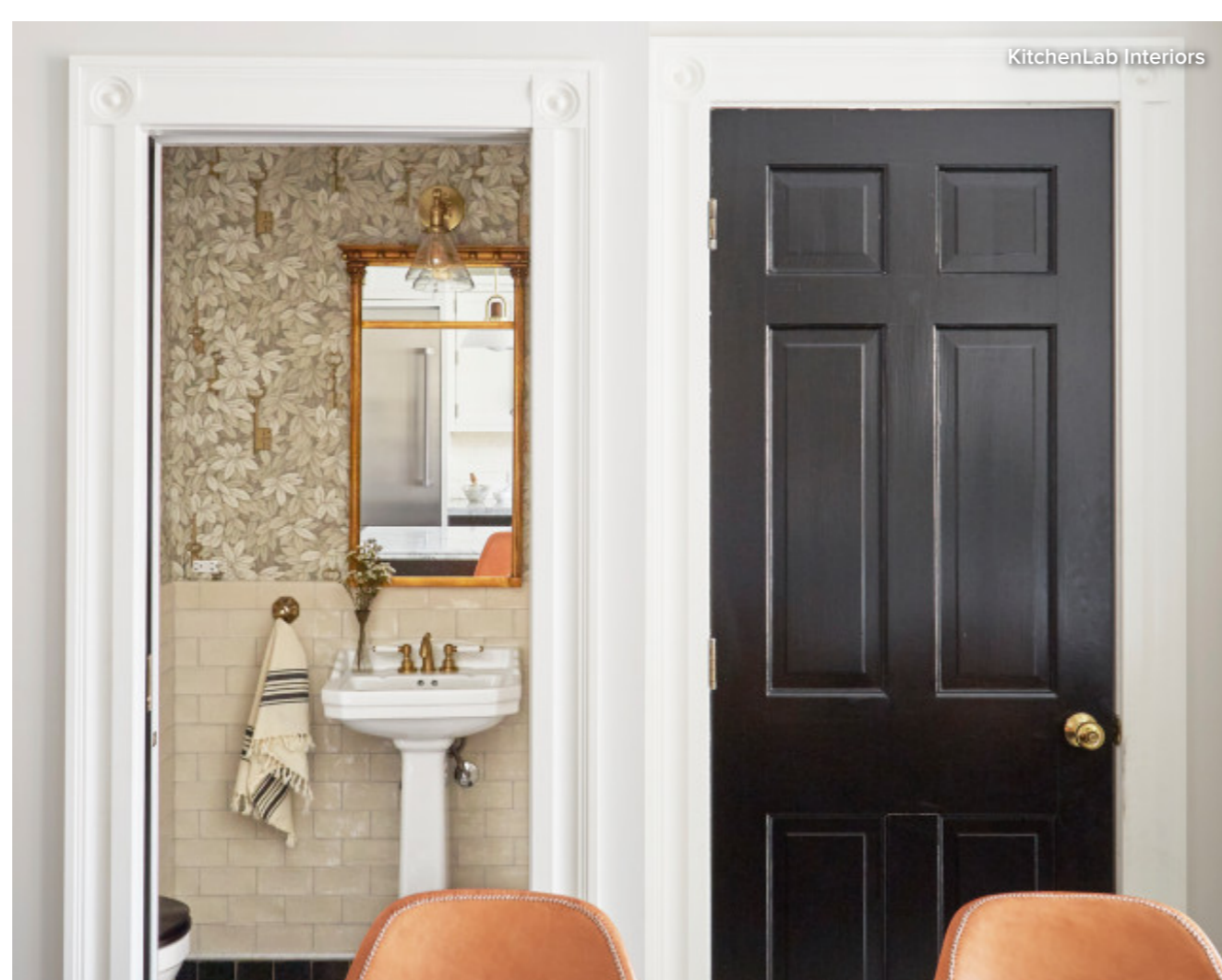
**After:** "After we removed the wall, we had a ton of square footage to work with in here," Zaveloff says. "It made it possible to add the large kitchen island, which measures 9 1/2 feet by 3 1/2 feet."

"I always like for an island to look more like furniture than a typical kitchen island," Zaveloff says. This meant using a slim countertop with an ogee edge and elements like this end that looks like a chest of drawers. The furniture-like look, walnut finish and traditional hardware give it Victorian-era style. "And details like this give the room a more collected feel," the designer says.

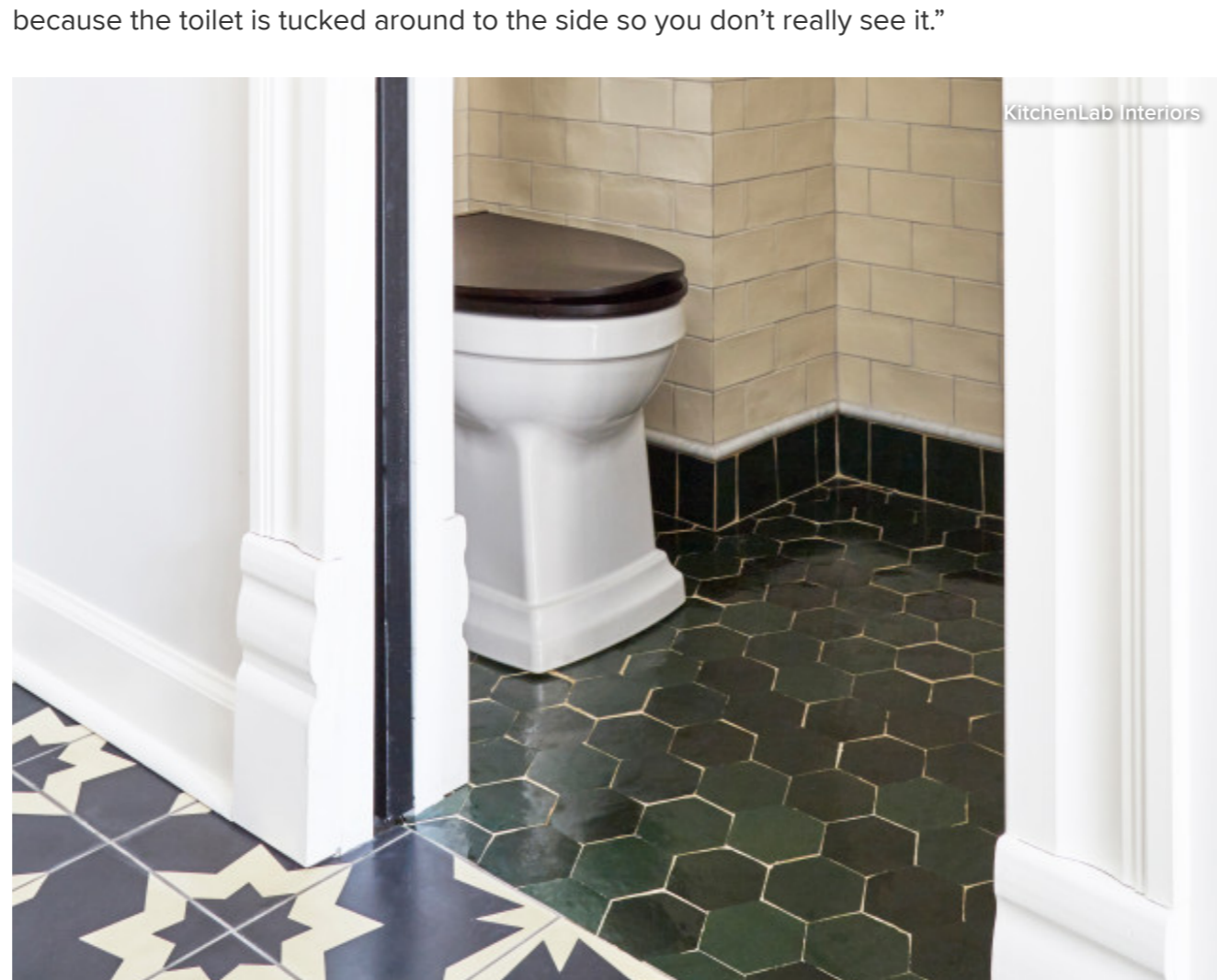
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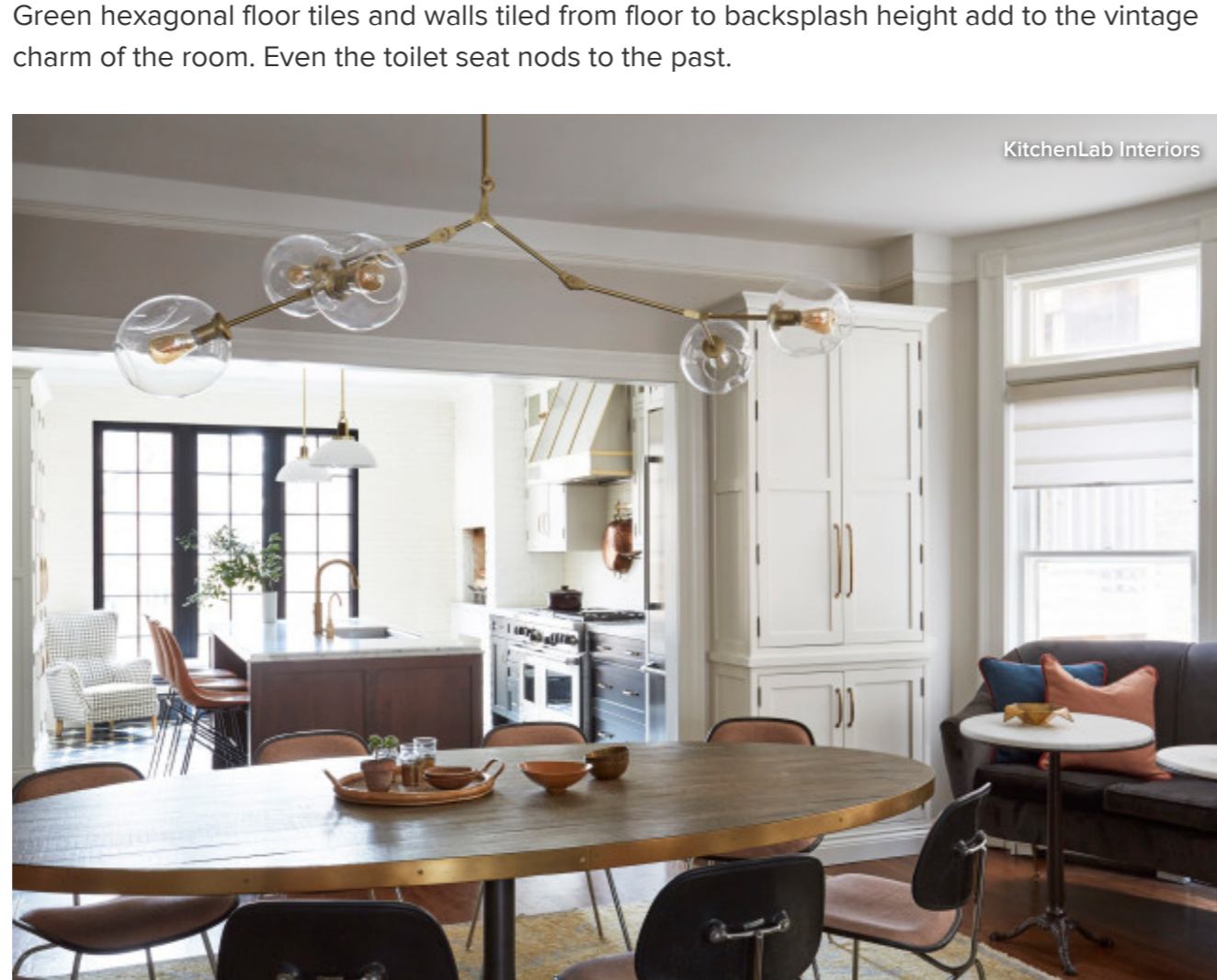
**Before:** The fridge was inconveniently located in the awkward space between the kitchen and dining room. The door on the left leads to the basement stairs. "Often we'll take out a back staircase to gain more square footage, but the homeowners liked having it and we didn't need to in this kitchen," Zaveloff says.



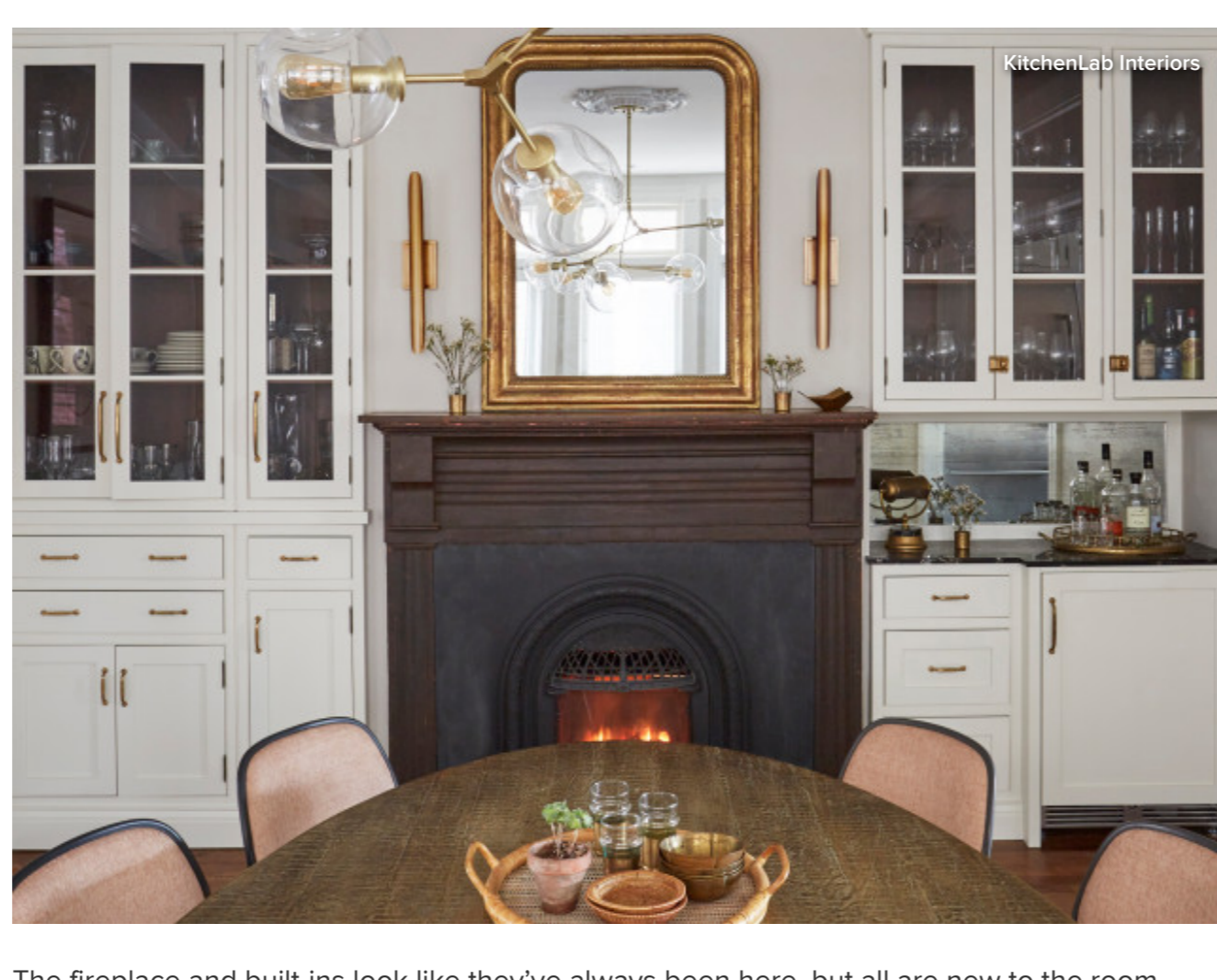
**After:** The basement staircase remained in the same spot. Zaveloff added a powder room where the fridge was before. "Usually I would never, ever locate a powder room directly off a kitchen like this if I could help it," she says. "But this one is so pretty with the tile, the mirror and the Fornasetti wallpaper that you actually want to leave the door open. Especially because the toilet is tucked around to the side so you don't really see it."



Green hexagonal floor tiles and walls tied from floor to backsplash height add to the vintage charm of the room. Even the toilet seat nods to the past.



Here's the view from the dining room to the kitchen. The homeowners already had the midcentury-modern-style furnishings and the chandelier. Zaveloff added more storage for the room in the corner.



The fireplace and built-ins look like they've always been here, but all are new to the room. There was an old chimney here but no fireplace. The designer created one and installed a gas line to fire it up again. She found the vintage mantel at Columbus Architectural Salvage in Columbus, Ohio, installed an insert from Heat & Glo, and added a gatterned tile hearth to the floor. The fireplace looks like a coal-burning version from Victorian times. Zaveloff surrounded it with new built-ins that look like they've been here for 150 years. There's a handy bar on the right with an antiqued mirror backsplash.

"The kitchen is the hangout spot," the designer says. "My clients are big readers, big foodies, they love to hang out and talk, and now their kitchen is the center for all of this in their home."

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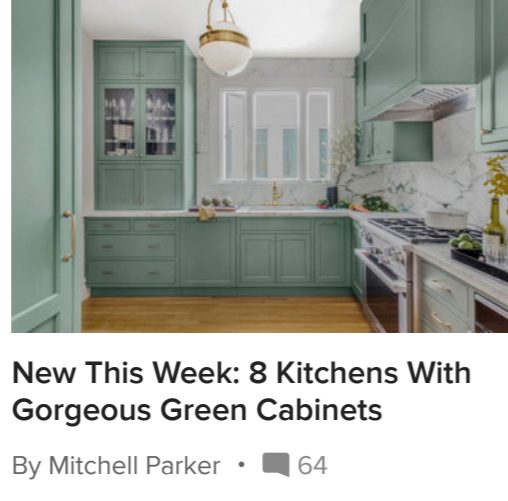
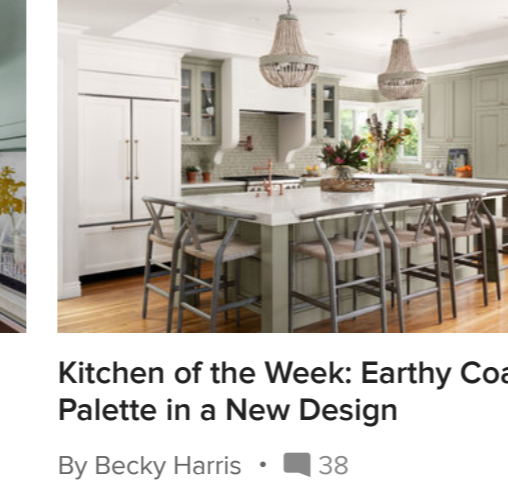
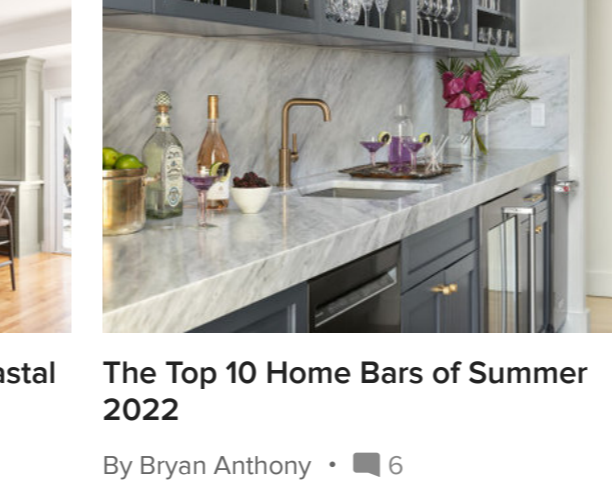
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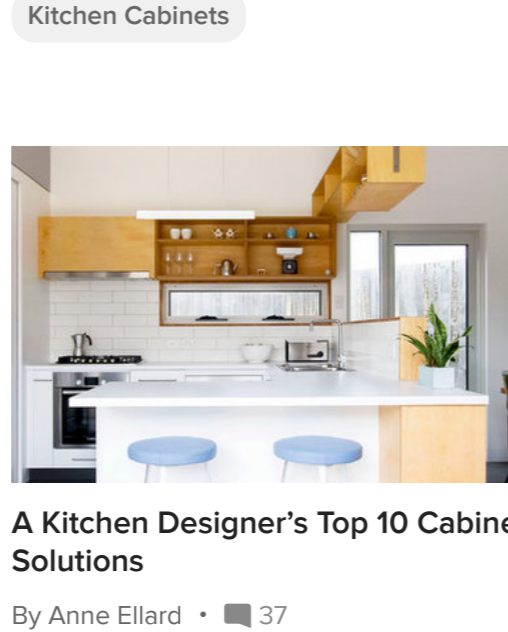
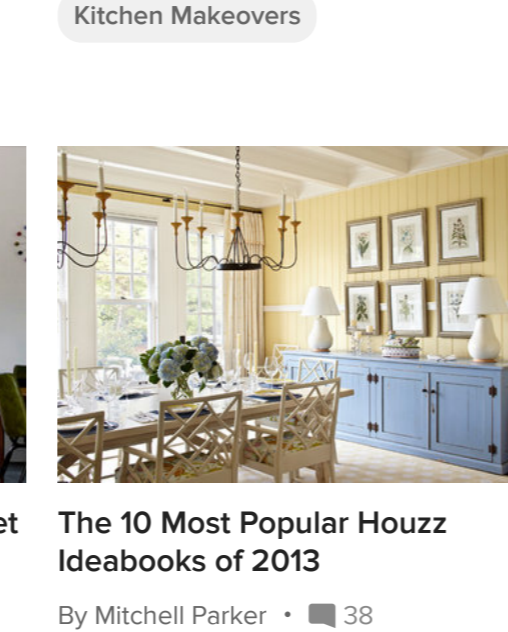
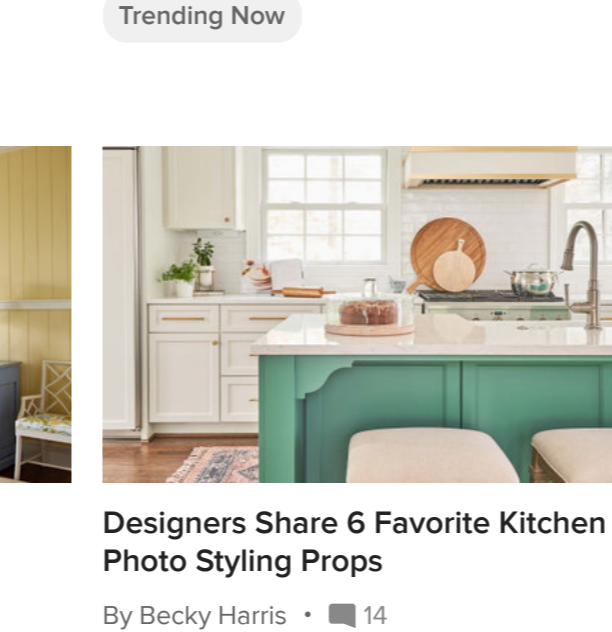
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