

# Modern Kitchen

## Makeover

Behind every modern farmhouse kitchen is a great renovation, as this North Carolina kitchen proves.

BY HANNAH STRANDBERG  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY BOB FORTNER PHOTOGRAPHY

Before remodeling a space, tour the rest of your home to reacquaint yourself with its structure and themes.

Even in a modern farmhouse kitchen, there are ways you can incorporate traditional farmhouse style. These backless barstools add a wonderful sense of old-timey nostalgia.

**A** North Carolina kitchen just got the makeover of a lifetime. Once dark and secluded from the rest of the house, a breath of life from Clearcut Construction & Co. turned it into a brilliant success story. Richard and Monica Ryder own the company, and work together to see their clients' dream become reality. Richard was the lead designer and builder on the project, and he took this modern farmhouse kitchen from boring to breathtaking.

#### SETTING A VISION

As lead designer, Richard spends a lot of time with blue prints, but he also does much of the actual building himself. "I'm very hands-on," he says. "The projects I take on—they get more and more special." It takes an experienced eye to master the balance between modern and traditional farmhouse elements, especially when you're not planning on reconstructing the entire home. Richard gives an example: "When you go into a house that is more traditional, and you go in with more of a farmhouse style, that can force your hand into a remodel of the whole house or it will look very odd when you walk into a room." Before remodeling a space, tour the rest of your home to reacquaint yourself with its structure and themes.

*Tip*

KEEP COUNTER DECOR MINIMAL TO KEEP YOUR MODERN KITCHEN FRESH AND USER-FRIENDLY



With the island as the black accent piece, this kitchen becomes grounded and balanced for a calming and welcoming atmosphere.



(top right) This glass-paneled sliding door leading into the kitchen can be there when you need it and disappear when you don't. Either way, it's a win-win for modern farmhouse style. (bottom right) The glass geo pendant lights tie in with the rest of the kitchen in an unforgettable way. Beside the more traditional look of the herringbone tile pattern, the lights add minimalistic beauty to the kitchen's modern farmhouse style.

## Black IS BACK

How do you incorporate black without darkening a space?

- **CALCULATE PERCENTAGES.** Black is stunning in modern farmhouse style, but how do you add it to your color palette without overwhelming the room? For Richard, that's where percentages come in. "In a room, it would probably be around 25-30% maximum where you would want to use black or it would be overpowering," he says. "That's a good percentage to use as a rule of thumb."
- **ADD AN ACCENT.** One way to do this is to focus on a single accent piece for the black. In this North Carolina kitchen, Richard turned the island into a black focal point. When adding black or any other dark accent color, it's always a good idea to pick a central location. A kitchen island is perfect because it grounds the room without creating a lopsided effect.
- **CREATE CONTRAST.** Richard uses plenty of white to balance the black. White cabinetry, gray and white marble tiles with a high-beamed ceiling keep the lightness of modern farmhouse style. It creates a space that welcomes one and all to gather around the island for coffee and conversation.



"Ceiling beams, wood shelves, cabinets—those are what I like to keep consistent with the architecture.

You would see those in an old farmhouse!"



Natural marble is a stunning choice for tiles and countertops. Combined with the X design embellishment on the side of the center island, it pulls barnyard nostalgia into an otherwise contemporary space.



(bottom) Richard wanted to give his clients as much storage as he could in their freshly remodeled kitchen. By adding brass handles and glass accents, he made storage look stylish.



## Let's BEGIN

Here are Richard's tips for how you should tackle a remodeling.

- 1. NEEDS.** Before he begins to remodel, Richard looks around to find what needs to be fixed. Is the space too choppy? Is there enough natural light? "A lot of times I'll walk in and see the problem right away," Richard says. For example, "There's a layout problem and everything's dated." Then you can figure out how to fix the problem.
- 2. STYLE.** "You have to determine the style of the client," Richard says. "That takes some finagling and some time." Richard gives his clients "homework" before the construction process begins. For example, he'll give a husband and wife several inspiration pictures. They have to find three projects they both agree on. "You'll find that's quite a process sometimes," Richard says.
- 3. SPOT CONSISTENCIES.** Once the clients finish their homework, Richard finds stylistic consistencies across the three pictures they choose. "A lot of times it's what's trending, but a lot of times I'll find that people are leaning more towards modern than traditional." With this particular kitchen, Richard immediately noticed that the couple liked herringbone tile patterns. Thus, he added the natural marble herringbone tiling on the kitchen walls.

(top) String lights have always been a farmhouse favorite, but they're particularly popular right now. "It adds such a warm look," Richard says. "It really helps the aesthetics of a space, and it's a great way to light up an area without spending a lot of money on lights."

(bottom) The outside patio also got a refresh. When we asked about the pros of picking gravel for the ground, Richard says, "Authenticity and cost. To do something like this, it's much less than concrete or applied stone. It's a great look and it's something you would see back in the day."

### KEEPING AUTHENTICITY

Modern farmhouse style is a conversation between old and new. As Richard's philosophy goes, an authentic core structure is key. "Ceiling beams, wood shelves, cabinets—those are what I like to keep consistent with the architecture. You would see those in an old farmhouse," he says. "Light fixtures, hardware and trim detailing on the walls, I like to keep those on the modern side." For the wall tiles, natural marble recreates the feel of traditional farmhouse aesthetics. Contrasted with the geo pendant lights above the island, the herringbone tile pattern merges two eras together for a seamless look.

Believe it or not, the kitchen ceiling was not always the 11-foot beamed-beauty it is now. The original 8-foot ceiling did little to help the room until Richard and his crew found the opportunity to give it a facelift. "That move alone really changed the kitchen," Richard notes. "And then adding the beams to the ceiling as well for structure and texture." The raised ceiling not only opens up the room, but lightens the space. And that's what the modern farmhouse is all about.

SEE SOURCES, PAGE 128.

