

# Chicago HOME + GARDEN

## Special Delivery

Just in time for baby, a new kitchen and bathroom are born in Roscoe Village

BY GINA BAZER



While the Rostans had always imagined their kitchen would have marble counters, the designers convinced them that the material is porous and stains easily, making it impractical. The couple went with white quartz and have no regrets.

If you've ever been pregnant—or been close to someone who has—then you're probably familiar with a phenomenon called "nesting." The term refers to a primal instinct that leads females, be they birds or humans, to clean up their houses in preparation for a baby's arrival. The only difference is that while birds throw together some twigs in a tree, women redo their kitchens and bathrooms.

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This was the situation in the Rostan household. During her fifth month of pregnancy, *Chicago Home + Garden's* art director, Megan Duffy-Rostan, decided it was time to finally tackle the project she had contemplated since the day (six years ago) she and her husband, Tim Rostan, moved into their Roscoe Village Victorian row house. Tim had painted and put stylish hardware on their dated, cottage-style cabinets, but Megan couldn't help but mutter under her breath every time she had to grab silverware from the canisters on her counter (the ancient drawers threatened to collapse under the weight of the couple's forks and knives).

For years she had saved a photo of a kitchen she'd ripped out of *Domino* magazine, a clean, modern design featuring open shelving, Ikea cabinets, and marble countertops. Tim, too, was a fan of this design. So by the time that nesting instinct kicked in, the couple had only to hire a design/build firm (they went with Hudson Home, whose work Megan was familiar with through the magazine) and figure out a budget (they had decided to install a master bath while they were at it). The countdown to baby and project completion began.

In the end, Steve Bruss and Kory Blosky at Hudson Home pulled off the job in three months. Baby Patrick arrived about a week later. "It was like giving birth twice," says Megan, who is thrilled with both babies. She shared some behind-the-scenes moments of the project with us.



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**The Kitchen** “Our goal was to get a Bulthaup kitchen on an Ikea budget,” Megan says. “But we wanted a minimum of upset,” adds Tim, referring to how the new design would relate to the rest of the house. “We live in a Victorian, with small rooms, and we didn’t want to pretend it was something it wasn’t.” So instead of eliminating the wall dividing the existing narrow kitchen and the dining room (these days, a common solution to space problems), Bruss shifted it down a few feet, thereby lengthening the kitchen. He also shortened this wall and ended it with a cutout, a modern take on the stained-glass pass-through window that had been there before. The result was a modern, open look that respected the original layout of the house.

As for the Ikea budget? Thanks to Hudson Home’s approach, you’d never know there was one. The firm didn’t see this as a budget project, Bruss says; it saw it as a custom project, with some elements that were less expensive (the stainless steel cabinets from Ikea) and some that were more expensive (the rift-sawn oak veneer shelving and enclosure for the refrigerator).

Bruss was also conscious of his clients’ desire to retain a feeling of warmth. To balance the coolness of the stainless steel, he suggested striated 6-by-26-inch un-glazed porcelain tile, set horizontally, for the backsplash, and a warm limestone, cut in planks rather than squares, for the floor. “Everything in this kitchen is rectangular and moves toward the big windows in the back,” says Bruss. “This makes the space feel more expansive.”

How did the final product match up with the *Domino* kitchen? “Ours is way better,” Megan says.

**The Master Bathroom** Clearheaded about their kitchen, the Rostans had no idea what to do about their master bath. Or, more precisely, their lack of one. Living in a row house, all of their neighbors had the same long master bedroom upstairs, and several of them had squeezed a shower, toilet, and sink along one of the bedroom’s short walls, in essence creating a galley bathroom at the end of the room. Tim and Megan assumed they’d have to do the same thing, but that wasn’t what Hudson Home had in mind.

Bucking expectations, Bruss and company put a shower near the middle of the space, set against a central wall bank that acts as a divider between the bedroom and the bathroom. Pocket doors allow for privacy when closed, but when left open create an easy flow between the spaces. “We think of it as a hotel suite,” says Tim. And, indeed, just as one might see in a boutique hotel room, a flat-screen TV installed within the central wall bank on the bedroom side reduces the need for extraneous furniture and makes wires invisible.

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Once the problem of where to put the bathroom was solved, the fun part was turning it into what Bruss describes as “this little gem in the middle of the room, around which everything flows.” The gem image couldn’t be more apt: the wall containing the sinks (elegantly undermounted in white laminate Ikea cabinets) glistens, thanks to a large backlit mirror that hangs over a glossy, cappuccino-colored marble backsplash.

While that side of the bathroom is wrapped in a warm sheen, the opposite side is a study in matte surfaces, with large unglazed chocolate brown porcelain tiles on the wall and tiny tumbled-stone tiles in the shower.

“Too much of one or the other would have been too overwhelming,” says Bruss, adding that what unites the sides is the rectangular shape of the tiles on the walls.

Chocolate brown reappears in the form of paint color on the center wall bank, visually connecting the bedroom and bath. The effect is at once warm and dramatic. So much for doing what the neighbors did.