

# SanLuisObispo

## The Olin home in SLO: Simple, clean lines and openness

Minimal decor allows the architecture to be the star

By Rebecca Juretic

rajuretic@sbcglobal.net July 30, 2014 Updated 8 hours ago

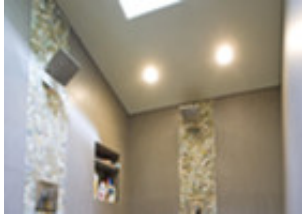
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Olin's decor is simple and spare to keep the focus on the home's architecture.

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- **TIPS FROM AMY OLIN**

**FALL FOR YOUR COUNTERTOPS** Waterfall countertops, where the countertop material continues down the side to the floor, are popular these days. It is a sleek and contemporary look, although it also works well in traditional kitchens. A waterfall design can highlight an interesting countertop material, and can protect cabinetry in an area that receives a lot of moisture or traffic.

**A SLEEKER FRIDGE** Built-in refrigerators can be worth the expense if a streamlined look is a priority. Special hinges allow it to be seamlessly integrated into your kitchen cabinetry, whereas freestanding refrigerators tend to “stick out.” Be prepared to spend at least \$6,000 for this look.

**GO CUSTOM** Though pricier than most other types of wood flooring, custom-milled, solid wood floors provide countless options for plank width, grain, and character. They also can be finished to coordinate with any interior.

Amy Olin is an emergency room physician who spends her workdays in a tense environment. Her home environment couldn't be less so.

Built in 1973, the San Luis Obispo residence recently underwent a transformation, creating a sleek and restful space conducive to unwinding alone or with friends.

Amy bought the home in 2011 because of its contemporary design. “All of the windows gave the home a very open feeling,” she said. “I loved the high ceilings and wood beams throughout the house. The architecture is so unique and intricate.”

She wanted the remodel to enhance, rather than detract, from these features. “I wanted it to be contemporary with clean lines. Nothing too dramatic or over the top,” she said.

She hired San Luis Obispo firm [Stalwork Inc.](#) to handle both design and construction for the project that took place earlier this year.

The focal point of the remodel was the cramped, galley-style kitchen. According to Olin, it had the home’s original “beat-up cabinets.” The narrow space led to a dead end, which inhibited traffic flow when she entertained.

The new kitchen is larger, borrowing space from a closet. It is also more open, with an L-shaped island that divides the area from the sunken den. This provides significantly more counter space, plus bar seating for four.

The island is topped with Caesarstone in “pebble,” a gray that mimics the look of concrete, but with “all the long-term durability that an engineered quartz surface provides,” said Bryan Ridley, the Stalwork architect who designed the project. The island has waterfall edges at both ends, meaning the material continues down the side, all the way to the floor. This technique, popular in recent years, creates “visual continuity,” said Ridley, “making the island appear as a single object rather than a countertop simply sitting atop cabinets.”

The Stalwork team removed most of the overhead cabinets to amplify light and space in the kitchen. The new cabinets are maple, a light-hued wood chosen for its clean and consistent grain. Etched glass inserts on the cabinets that flank the kitchen sink add to the light and spacious feel of the kitchen.

Olin initially worried about cabinet space. However, her new, oversized pantry more than makes up for the eliminated upper cabinets. “I have had no problem with current storage space — even have a few unfilled drawers,” she said.

New appliances are well-suited to Olin’s busy lifestyle. The rear of the kitchen is now a laundry area, with washer and dryer and concealed behind cabinetry — much more accessible than their previous spot in the mudroom.

The oven and microwave are mounted inconspicuously beneath the counter, keeping sightlines and countertops clear. Olin’s big splurge was a built-in Thermador refrigerator that cost \$8,000. It has special hinges that allow its panel-covered doors to sit flush with surrounding cabinetry.

Main living areas in the house were rejuvenated with new surfaces. The crew installed new drywall, replacing walls that were damaged when Olin removed wood paneling years ago. She chose to keep walls white. “As much as I love color, white is clean, simple and doesn’t distract from the cool features in the home,” she said.

When Amy first moved into the house, she ripped out old, stained carpeting and did a DIY job installing inexpensive bamboo flooring she purchased from Costco. Ridley recommended an upgrade to custom solid walnut flooring. The floors were hand-milled “like they were one-hundred years ago or more, and have an unparalleled depth and richness to them,” he said. They kept the floors unstained to showcase that richness.

The wood ceilings were sanded and given a natural stain. The ceiling beams, previously the same wood tone, now stand out with a new coating of Wild Truffle by Kelly-Moore, which Ridley calls a “rich, dark, slightly French gray.”

The skylights and large expanses of glass in the home bring in ample sunlight but also make the home hot in the summer. Olin had air conditioning installed so that she would slumber more comfortably on

afternoons when she works night shifts at French Hospital Medical Center and Arroyo Grande Community Hospital.

She kept decorating to a minimum, adding a few pieces of contemporary furniture, some area rugs for comfort, and new art for the new walls. She favors “clean lines, simplicity, solid colors and mid-century modern looks,” she said. She prefers a few meaningful items to lots of furniture and knick knacks. Her favorite piece is her elm dining room table that was handmade by a friend.

According to Olin, she now has a space that is “much more open and airy,” and a kitchen where cooking dinner is a pleasurable task — even when it happens to be 8 in the morning.

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