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DESIGN MASTERY in Mendham

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MASTERFUL MIX

Artfully combining different materials, textures and patterns makes the kitchen and master bath in a new-construction Mendham home triumphant.

By **Haley Longman**

Design by **Anthony Albert Studios**

Photography by **Wing Wong from MemoriesTTL**

"Fresh and invigorating" is how designer Anthony Passanante of Anthony Albert Designs in Waldwick describes this Mendham kitchen. "With so many mixed materials," he says, "your eyes wander, almost like it's art."



They knew what they liked, this couple with three young children. And building a new home from scratch, like the one they were building in Mendham, means you pretty much get what you want, from the layouts down to the doorknobs. But sometimes the very grandeur of one's vision calls out for a designer's eye to help fulfill it.

Thus Anthony Albert Passanante of Waldwick-based Anthony Albert Studios was hired before construction officially began. In conjunction with Nick Cusano from Cusano Associates Architects, Mendham, Passanante designed the kitchen and master bathroom, taking as a given the fact that this was, as he says, "not your average house. One side of the house's exterior looks like a rustic barn and the other is more modern." He wanted to echo that eclectic spirit inside, but that meant playing a high-stakes game. Combine disparate materials and elements wisely and you create a stunner; do it clumsily and you've got visual noise.

Passanante and Cusano got it right—in a collaboration of creative minds that was also a combination of aesthetic approaches. Mixed materials abound in the kitchen especially, where a wooden piece the client spotted in the designer's studio inspired custom-designed hollow beams above the island that were designed by Passanante and made by contractor Mike Savercool's mill. The brass hood over the stove was constructed by a local artisan and then antiqued, and the rustic-chic vibe translates as well in the custom rolling pantry door. Another highlight is the storage section next to it that's framed with a mirror and glass shelving.

"I love a mirror in the kitchen," says the designer. "It's unexpected, and you get reflection back from the exterior."

Meanwhile, the off-white quartzite countertops from Dente Trading and custom Anthony Albert Studio cabinets, coupled with brass hardware from Hardware

The butler's pantry and the kitchen clearly belong together but aren't too matchy-matchy. They share a color palette, homey elements and brass hardware, but the countertops, for example, are made of quartzite in the kitchen and granite in the butler's pantry. Both are from Dente Trading in Cedar Grove.

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Designs, keep things fresh and modern.

The adjacent, two-sided butler's pantry is an extension of the main kitchen but with a style all its own. Passanante dropped the ceiling over the cabinets and raised it in the middle to incorporate the rustic beams; the blue-gray cabinets, also custom, match the island; and the antique brass pendant light coordinates with the rest of the hardware. There's plenty of storage in here, including a wine fridge, glass cabinets to house servingware and open walnut shelving for liquor bottles and display pieces.

In fact, storage was a must for this busy family of five. A few hidden organizational gems include a cabinet with a rollout shelf that holds the kids' water bottles to make life easier ahead of their sports games. There is also a refrigerator that cools their beverages so that they can grab and go.

Walk upstairs and you'll see that the construction here isn't run-of-the-mill either—the master suite has its own wing, separate from the five remaining bedrooms. So the master bathroom, one of eight in the home, needed to have that wow factor too. "Rather than your typical shower pushed off to the corner, we wanted it to be the focal point of the room," Passanante says, explaining the design

decisions he and Cusano made. That meant making it oversized and installing his-and-hers faucets from California Faucet Company so that each party could control water temperature and pressure separately. The white-and-gray tiles from Westfield Tile resemble a waterfall.

For visual effect, his-and-hers vanities made of Calacatta marble were purposely not positioned next to each other. Instead, they're on opposite walls. "This way, if you're standing at one vanity and looking in the mirror, you get all these reflections back," Passanante says. In between is the spacious Victoria + Albert tub, which is situated under a large window that looks out to the woodsy backyard. The bluish-gray custom cabinets were a meticulous choice here just as they were in the kitchen, as they "contrast against the tile and add visual interest," he says.

This project was completed just before the pandemic began, about a year and a half after initial work started. "This kitchen is truly the hub of the home," says Passanante. "It's definitely the clients' favorite part—it's pretty much where they live." Yes, but who'd deny that its boldness finds a kindred spirit in the master bath upstairs?

This shower is large enough for two and was intended to be the focal point of the show-stopping master bathroom. The glass shower door reflects light from the Schonbek chandelier, as do the vanities on opposite walls—and the tub that presides between them.



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