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All of the cabinetry was replaced from its original creamy, yellowish tones. Behind the kitchen sink are new windows made to look old, embellished with wrought-iron accents installed to replicate passage to old-fashioned fire escapes. The red fabric above the sink was repurposed drapery fabric from the homeowners' previous home. To the right of the apron front sink is a faux cabinet door and drawer, which hides the dishwasher.



# A Taste of Paris

A FRENCH VICTORIAN KITCHEN AND BATH REDESIGN  
BURSTS WITH ROMANTIC PARISIAN INFLUENCES.

By ABELLA CARROLL

Photography by MIKE KASKEL PHOTOGRAPHY

WHEN IT COMES TO TRANSFORMING YOUR RESIDENCE  
INTO A VICTORIAN HOME UNIQUELY YOURS, TAKE  
COMFORT IN KNOWING TALENTS LIKE ILLINOIS  
DESIGNER JENNIFER RAHALEY ARE AVAILABLE TO  
HELP YOUR DREAM BECOME REALITY.

As a dedicated member of DDK Kitchen Design Group for six years and having 17 years of experience owning her own business, Jennifer does more than help people create their dream kitchens and baths. To these homeowners, she was a friendly partner who cared about their needs and took seriously their desire for a home filled with old-fashioned romance to remind them of Paris.

"It is my goal to listen to a homeowner's needs and design it to be an efficient use of space, make it functional, and of course, beautiful," Jennifer says. "Even if a couple has issues in communicating their vision, or changes their minds completely on a concept, I am there to work with them until the project is complete and they are happy with their new home."



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on a Parisian feel  
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**red** displayed in  
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curtain fabrics.

## THE RETURN TO FRENCH VICTORIAN ROMANCE

When this couple became empty-nesters and moved from their large suburban home to a smaller one-story condo in Evanston, Ill., it was their mission to remodel the historic condo into a place of French Victorian romance. Although the dwelling had been remodeled in the '80s, the makeover was poorly done, and it gave Jennifer a blank canvas to begin anew.

"The lady of this home had a love for red with accents of black and complementing hues," Jennifer says. "We had a well-laid-out plan, until she became lovestruck after a trip to Paris. She changed her mind on many levels, and we went with it, making the final design exactly how she wanted, with enhancements much closer to reflecting her experience in Paris. She was a joy to work with, modifying the plans while staying dedicated to the Victorian look and feel, and keeping to her original color palette."

## THE HEART OF THE HOME

When it came to redesigning the kitchen, Jennifer found some pleasant surprises. "We gutted it down to the studs, and behind layers and layers of drywall, we discovered the original brick," she says. "The homeowner also found the original doors thought to be maple; instead, they turned out to be white birch with very pretty grain. We agreed to restore them to their original glory."

The kitchen took on a Parisian feel with splashes of red displayed in appliances, décor and curtain fabrics. The lady of the house brought back inspirations from her Paris hotel, including French-style black and white patterns, wrought iron window accents and smooth velvet finishes on black cabinets and furnishings. The clever planning gives one the feeling of spaciousness—which is always a challenge in the small, narrow spaces reminiscent of the Victorian era.

Personal touches both whimsical and functional include hanging pots for space-saving efficiency, 9.5-foot-tall ceilings, a tilt-down wastebasket



**ABOVE:** The personal touches make this kitchen the heart of the home. The lady of the house searched far and wide to find a red microwave that would fit nicely into a niche beneath the counter. Parisian signage above the doorway reminds her of travels abroad.

**OPPOSITE:** The black and white diamond patterned floor was originally white oak, and was stripped, painted and wax rubbed through. All cabinetry was replaced from its original '80s renovation, which had been poorly done. The exposed hinges, however, are original and fit well with the time period.

beneath a narrow counter space and a pot-filler faucet above the stove.

By listening to her client's wishes while also infusing her own creative talents, Jennifer was able to design the kitchen to be functional and fun, while still keeping the traditional traits of a vintage home. All of the cabinetry was built with exposed hinges reminiscent of the Victorian time period, and treasures like Parisian signage grace the walls and doorways.

## BATHROOM ROMANCE AND RELAXATION

Bringing the look of Paris's most luxurious spaces continued into the master bathroom, where the area was transformed into a place of respite with a touch of refinement. The color palette continued in the black and white theme, with a splash of taupe to soften and visually widen the modest-sized bathroom. The flooring came to life with marble mosaic tile creating a beautiful pattern, which ultimately complemented both the painted linen cabinets and the soapstone countertops.

While staying dedicated to the Victorian look, there are modern amenities for comfort and safety, including the new shower and claw-foot

tub and light fixtures that were brought back from a previous home.

Victorian accents grace the wall above the sink, complete with a custom mirror that doubles as a recessed medicine cabinet. The final renovation now allows the homeowners to relax in Old World charm and pampered indulgence with modern amenities, while enjoying the look and feel of a vintage powder room complete with the original radiator.

## LIVING THE LIFE YOU LOVE

When a homeowner downsizes, it's a challenge to bring all the comfort and opulence of a large home into a smaller space. Even so, Jennifer collaborated with this homeowner and exceeded all of their expectations. Beyond going the extra mile to make sure the couple was completely happy with their renovation, the end result is a combination of Jennifer's willingness to change, redesign the redesign, and listen thoughtfully to make the homeowner's dream come true.

The total makeover was completed in eight months and gave the new empty-nesters a chance to be a couple again, surrounded by all of the romance, privacy and treasured historic ambience they desired.

## VICTORIAN PERIOD RENOVATION TIPS

If you are planning on remodeling your vintage home and expect to keep its period-era charm, there are considerations to think about before taking the leap.

- **Plan ahead.** Decide on your budget and designer before you begin your renovation. After researching other homeowners with successful vintage home makeovers, choose the right designer for you—one who is an expert in period homes, has excellent credentials, can stick to your budget and will listen to your needs and interpret them accordingly.
- **Small-space solutions.** Victorian homes were built in cities during times that experienced rapid population growth, which meant small lot sizes, so they built upward instead of outward. Discuss with your designer ways to incorporate space-saving amenities, visual effects to make the rooms appear larger, and accents that give you the feeling of intimate comfort.
- **Windows as decorative elements.** Unique windows evoke signature eye appeal for Victorian homes. Whether stained glass, leaded glass or wrought iron, consider using exterior décor, as this homeowner did with the installation of decorative wrought iron outside the kitchen window—cleverly creating period charm without using up space inside the home.
- **Make it personal.** The best way to ensure success is to communicate to your designer your personality, passions and desires. This homeowner loved the romance of Paris, and by working together, they succeeded in sticking to her wishes: the color palette, Parisian elegance and touches of function mixed together with luxurious French ambience.

The homeowner's love for all things red is evident in the oven, toaster and accessories. One of the charming elements both functional and unique is the pot-filler faucet just above the stove.



The flooring is marble mosaic tile that created a more formal feel in the master bath. The Victorian look continued with the silk and velvet jacquard window covering beside the original repainted radiator.





**The clever planning gives one the feeling of spaciousness**—always a challenge in the small, narrow spaces reminiscent of the Victorian era.



**ABOVE LEFT:** Above the sink and soapstone counter is a custom mirror that doubles as a recessed medicine cabinet with matching arched design inside. Old and new complement one another with modern day crystal candle sconces and chandelier, while a vintage marble bust of a European goddess from their travels graces the hallway niche.

**ABOVE:** The claw-foot tub is vintage-looking but is actually made of lightweight acrylic with metal feet. The Parisian signage was originally square, but the homeowner had it resized to a softer, circular shape complementing the perfectly sized, black-painted armoire.

**LEFT:** The master bath exudes Victorian romance, where many details were inspired by the photos the homeowner brought back from Paris, including the black outlines within the shower niches. She strayed from the black and white theme to taupe for the wall squares.