

COOL, CALM & COLLECTED

First-time homeowners take character cues from an old house and give it even more soul with projects like a revamped kitchen and handcrafted furniture.

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AS A NEW MOM, ERIN FRANCOIS GAVE HERSELF A BREAK WHEN DAUGHTER SYLVIA WAS BORN. IT WAS THE FIRST TIME SINCE THE AGE OF 7 SHE WASN'T MAKING THINGS. "For the first six months of my daughter's life, I bought (rather than made)," she says, adding, "SurvivalMode!" Today, Erin's sewing machine is happily humming again, designing decor and making improvements in the 1936 Tudor duplex that she and her husband, Ken, bought in Minneapolis a few years ago. "We knew we wanted to live in the city, but as we began house-hunting, we realized we were coming up short with what we could afford," Erin says. "Ken found the duplex the night it hit the market, and we were intrigued by the financial sense it made." (They rent out the upstairs unit.)

Erin was immediately sold on the gable roof, half-timbered facade, and arched opening between the living and dining rooms. Although the house had plenty of built-in charm, it needed decorative upgrades and a kitchen overhaul. "We DIYed every inch of the space together, from adding insulation to the walls to tiling the backsplash to planking the ceiling," says Erin, who blogs about her projects at *Francois et Moi*.

"The No. 1 reason I DIY is if I can't find what I'm looking for in stores or if it is out of my price range," she says. "But, inevitably since having my daughter, I've become much more likely to buy something if the process to make it is super time- and labor-intensive."



FRESH FINESSE Erin Francois strategically deployed small DIY updates inside and outside her 1936 Minneapolis home. The entry, *above*, got a style boost from a pair of planters she assembled from store-bought wooden boxes, crown molding, drawer knobs as feet, and iron pulls. Erin revived her living room, *opposite*, with rug-hook pillows and a cerused paint treatment on a pedestal side table her grandfather made decades ago.

"I'M DRAWN TO A MIX OF A FEW FAVORITE STYLES: SCANDINAVIAN, EARLY AMERICAN, MIDCENTURY, AND MODERN. IF I HAD TO DESCRIBE MY HOME IN A WORD, IT WOULD BE COLLECTED."

ERIN FRANCOIS, HOMEOWNER

