

basement REHAB

The basement is rapidly becoming a hotspot for renovation. Traditionally, this underground space has been in the same category as the attic: storage space. The upper and lower reaches of the house always seem to be the collection areas where holiday decorations, unused possessions, and odd-ball stuff end up gathering dust. By redoing your basement, you may double the living space of your home. It's time to say goodbye to the packrat days.

This space is underneath the stairs, with a low, uneven ceiling, making this corner unfit for adult use. The project goal was to revamp the basement on a small budget to create a kid-friendly play area. The flooring used was a vinyl, which reacts well to moisture and doesn't expand or rot. The little house was created by obtaining trimming shaped in shingle-like pieces and painting them. The little door and window were done by a contractor. Little tri-colored triangles were painted on the walls to give the room pizzazz, so it looks fun and enticing. The pre-existing couch was reinvented with colorful pillows and accenting ottomans. Mission Accomplished: Happy kids- Happy parents!





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LET'S GET STARTED

First things first: assess your basement space and options. Go down there and survey the situation.

Do it yourself or hire a contractor?

It all depends on your location and how much work needs to be done. You may need to take building codes into consideration with things like wiring, plumbing, and heating/cooling. While a basement renovation can be a do-it-yourselfer, especially if the basement is a raw white box, you want the revamp to be done right to maximize your enjoyment. Letting a professional contractor assist will turn that finished basement space into increased home value.

Clean the entire basement. If you haven't used it as living space, chances are it isn't the most pleasant place on earth. Get your hands on some cleaning supplies and clean every inch. If you have mold in your basement, it's essential to have it professionally removed.

Next, **add a dehumidifier**, since moisture is the number one enemy of a basement. The dehumidifier will keep things dry and also lessen the chances of mold growing back. Waterproofing is another way to keep your basement a healthy place to visit.

Now that everything is clean, the fun begins! It's time to **use your imagination**. What do you want to turn your basement into? You can do an extra bedroom, library or playroom. Often, that family room or den just isn't comfortable once all the kids and their friends pile in. Instead of knocking out walls to expand, why not use your basement?

Regardless of whether your downstairs has windows or not, it can be a phenomenal location for spending some quality family time. When making your decision, consider the size of the space as well as the number of electrical outlets available. **fyi**

Susan Strauss Design is well established as a leading full service design firm, founded by principal, Susan Strauss. The firm has been creating luxurious living environments for clients of the most discerning tastes for over a decade. With a well earned reputation as one of the premier firms on the East Coast, SSD's client base is firmly built on referrals and repeat clients.



getting to know your spice cabinet

Acquaint yourself with your spice rack, for each mysterious bottle can make your food - and your life- a little brighter.

garlic

Surely there is no mystery behind garlic's charming nickname of "stinking rose." Garlic has long been used by nearly all cultures to add sharp, pungent flavor to foods. You may reach for the powdered version, but like most spices, fresh garlic is simply unbeatable. To some, the more the merrier, thus the plethora of recipes such as forty-clove garlic chicken and forty-four clove garlic soup. Garlic-infused oil is amazing, but DO NOT make your own at home; leaving garlic in oil in the fridge has been linked to cases of botulism. There are plenty of good commercial brands which are the safer choice.

The same compound that makes garlic so pungent also bestows many amazing health benefits. This substance, called allicin, helps to alleviate high blood pressure and reduces bad cholesterol levels, thus improving cardiovascular health.

Garlic is a natural antibiotic which has been proven to reduce the risk of several cancers, and has been used successfully to cure colds. It's also an insect repellent. Garlic works as an anticoagulant and interferes with some other medications, so let your doctor know if you eat a lot of it, especially if you are on blood thinners.

onions

You may be thinking "Onions? That's not a spice, that's a vegetable!" But onion powder and dried minced onion both exist. Onions come in many varieties and you can match up each type with the food you are preparing. Yellow onions go well with any savory dish and caramelize when they are cooked for a long time. Red onions are usually used raw, since the color will fade when cooked. Sweet onions are useful in desserts. White onions are often used in Mexican food. Shallots are not included in this list, because although they resemble and are related to red onions, shallots are not onions. While all onions are interchangeable, using the right one for your dish will upgrade it from good to awesome. Lately, doctors have been suggesting that you should eat one serving of onion per day. The World Health Organization acknowledges onion extracts as a great way to afford respite from a cold and cough. Onions are also helpful to prevent the buildup of fatty plaque in artery walls. In addition, they have been proven to thwart certain kinds of cancers, and may also prevent blood from clumping.

parsley

Parsley is an herb that is extremely prevalent, both as a seasoning and as garnish. The two most commonly used types are the curly leaf and the flat leaf, also known as Italian parsley. Parsley has a fresh, slightly peppery and mildly bitter flavor, although flat leaf parsley tastes stronger and sweeter. Fresh or dried parsley adds flavor to any protein dish or stew; pretties up a pasta, rice, or potato dish, and jazzes up a tomato-based course. You can also mix it with other herbs- garlic, and/or butter to make a tasty dressing. Parsley can even be added to desserts for depth and sophistication. Parsley has quite a few benefits. It is chock-full of folates, Vitamin A, Beta-carotene, Vitamin C, Vitamin K, Calcium and Zeaxanthin, among other vitamins and minerals. It is rich in flavonoids, antioxidants, and healthy essential oils. It is a natural diuretic, which helps with weight loss. Parsley has also been shown to help reduce the risks of some forms of cancer, mitigate the pain and swelling that accompany arthritis, and improve the immune system to help the body fight diseases.