

https://www.santafenewmexican.com/life/real_estate/kitchen-makeover-maximized/article_54d29ac6-bc74-5914-a675-f7162183a859.html

LET'S GET PRACTICAL Kitchen makeover, maximized

By Edy Keeler

Sep 7, 2019



A simple layout that works great on a moderate budget. Courtesy photo

Kitchen renovations are the smartest type of remodel, with a return on investment, of 50 percent to 80 percent. But it's important to keep costs in check. So what does a new kitchen cost? A recent Houzz survey put the median U.S. kitchen renovation cost at \$14,000, and the ones I do here in Santa Fe are more.

The variables in kitchen design are infinite; we can't cover them all. For example, we can't estimate the cost of plumbing, electrical and other construction until you decide if you'll keep your layout or rearrange everything. So we concentrate on materials costs, with a few including installation.

Let's start with budgeting tips:

- Work with a designer to create a realistic budget — a light remodel can solve a lot of problems. Ripping it all out? Great design really saves money.
- Share your budget goal with the designer so you don't select things that will blow the budget.
- Put most of your budget into permanent items — cabinets, countertops and flooring.
- Most appliances last 10-15 years, so keep replacement in mind.
- Budget according to your home's value — overspending will reduce your return on investment.
- Keep 15 percent of your budget aside for surprise expenses — every remodel has them, not just in old adobes, but in any home old enough that codes and building types have changed.

A question of cabinets

The least expensive option, stock cabinetry, has a limited range of sizes and styles, so it's not ideal for a kitchen upgrade, especially if you want to rearrange your layout.

Semi-custom cabinets offer quality and customization options. Cabinet prices vary according to the style, with traditional face frame and inset door styles costing more than most Euro-style, or frameless, boxes.

Fully custom cabinets are built to your specifications. While they can be expensive, custom cabinets allow for more creativity — and they aren't always more expensive than semi-custom.

Custom cabinets with the latest storage features allow designers to create a highly efficient kitchen. Building a superior kitchen within your existing layout is a great way to get the most from your budget. Of course the real spend depends on the amount of cabinets.

Choosing your kitchen surfaces

Kitchen surfaces include flooring, countertops and backsplash. They can last 20 years or more, and together they create the look of your kitchen. Flooring is a matter of personal preference. Wood is durable and adds warmth to a kitchen. Trendy luxury vinyl tile offers incredible wood looks plus superior performance at an affordable price. Tile is more costly (and it's hard, which can be tiring to stand on), but the range of patterns and colors offers undeniably beautiful design options.

Solid-surface countertops are the design standard for new kitchens. No one wants to maintain grout joints on counters today. Your cost includes installation, and it's calculated by the square foot. Extra charges include sink cutouts or upgrades like ornate edge details. I generally stick to a plain "eased" edge, as it's most economical and easier to maintain. A good-sized kitchen may need 60 or more square feet of countertop material, but the math doesn't end there. Stone and quartz come in 9- to 10-foot slabs, and wasting material is costly. Again, final budgets depend on quantity.

Appliance selections and your kitchen remodel

Appliances are the other big-budget item in your kitchen. There are great-looking appliances at all price points, so pay attention to which features you'll actually use.

For the best prices, shop for an appliance package from a single vendor. At only \$4,799, this package from GE has a lot to offer: a 17.5-cubic-foot counter-depth French-door refrigerator (GYE18JBLTS), a 30-inch freestanding gas convection range (JGB700BEJTS), a stainless-steel interior dishwasher with hidden controls (GDT655SBLTS) and a 1.9-cubic-foot over-the-range sensor microwave oven (JVM7195BLTS).

Top brands like Bosch, Kitchen Aid, Samsung and Jenn-Air have excellent appliance packages in the \$4,000-\$7,000 range. If a commercial kitchen is your dream, a Wolf range with high-end dishwasher and refrigerator can be around \$16,000, while a complete Wolf and Sub Zero package is more like \$25,000.

Thoughtful design will maximize your remodel budget — you'll love your new kitchen, and increase your home's value, too. These guidelines are necessarily general. There are so many variables that no budget can fit all jobs, and renovations will bring surprises in the form of unforeseen expenses. I guarantee that you will have friends with very different budget experiences. But loving a new kitchen is a universal reaction.

Edy Keeler is the owner of Core Value Interiors. She is a designer specializing in remodeling and new construction with an emphasis on kitchen and bath renovations. She also is a color and a materials consultant. Reach her at 505-577-2167 or edyk@corevalueinteriors.com.