



your kitchen, your way

Personalized renovation solutions to create
a fashionable and functional space

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When it comes to designing or remodeling your kitchen, throw away the cookie cutter. Why? Because, of all the rooms in the home, the kitchen is the biggest multi-tasker. In addition to being a place to cook, kitchens are where homework is done, families bond, bills are paid, meals are eaten, friends are entertained and so much more.

However, what you do in your kitchen will be different from what your mom does. It will be different from what your neighbor does. Which will be entirely different from what your boss, sister, best friend and even the home's previous owner does.

When you plan or remodel a kitchen, you have a unique opportunity to match your home's Swiss Army knife of a room to your needs, your cooking habits and your lifestyle.

It's similar to buying a car. If you own a ranch in the Hill Country, you need a vehicle with four-wheel drive. If you've got kids, you need room to pack in the whole carpool, plus the dog. If you're a sales executive, you need a ▶



car you can be proud use with clients. In addition to looking great, your car's got to match your lifestyle and your needs. Your kitchen should be no different.

Designing a space that reflects your day-to-day life just makes sense. In fact, when planned well, a kitchen can even enhance your lifestyle, making it possible to do things you've always dreamed of. Like cooking better meals, spending more time with your kids, being better organized or chatting with friends while putting the finishing touches on a meal for a dinner party. Here are a few things to take into consideration.

What kind of cook are you?

Are you a gourmet chef, a fast-and-furious family cook, a take-out junkie or somewhere in between?

Like to cook, but on the run? Most professional couples and families with kids fall into this category. These households need a sizeable fridge and room for a well-stocked pantry to help reduce the number of trips to the store. A center island with stools provides a great place for kids to do homework or for one spouse catch up on bills while the other cooks.

Many on-the-go types like to entertain too, so in addition to quality appliances, you may want to consider some extras like a bar area or a way to control music on your stereo from your kitchen command center.

Even those who don't cook a lot can benefit from a carefully planned kitchen. Most fancy appliances will be wasted on the Chef Boyardee type. But, a good, centrally located microwave and a warming drawer will keep cooking quick and low-key. Space that might normally be devoted to a larger fridge or extra cabinet space can be devoted to other purposes for the no-frills reheating type - like an in-kitchen office area or even a flat-screen mounted in the dining area to entertain you while eating all those TV dinners.

Accomplished cooks - those for whom lavishing good food on others is pleasure in life - a well-equipped kitchen is in order. However, everyone's got a budget to keep in mind. So, to focus where you spend your dollars, ask yourself a few questions



What do you like to cook?

Love to bake? You should incorporate spacious countertops where you can roll, knead and cut dough to your heart's delight. You'll also need space to cool your baked goods and racks where your culinary creations can be placed. Then, outfit the cabinets below your workspace to accommodate all your baking accessories. Consider adding pull-out trays and appliance lifts so you don't have to strain to lift that heavy bowl or professional grade mixer from the back of the cabinet. Don't forget the convenience of a double oven.

If you're a vegetarian or are into fresh, healthy foods, you'll want to take a close look at your refrigerator choice. Think big fridge with big fruit and veggie drawers and a smaller freezer. A model with a bottom freezer will put frequently accessed fresh foods at eye level and at your fingertips.

Coffee lover? Consider a built-in, plumbed coffee machine that you can program to make an espresso, latte or cappuccino.

Asian food enthusiast? You'll want storage for a wok and Santoku knife, as well as wok ring for your cooktop.


Cook fried chicken for the family reunion every year? Consider a professional-style fryer in the kitchen.

Meat and potatoes man? Select an oven with a convection mode to speed up cooking while keeping all those savory juices in.

Have a passion for pasta? Add a convenient pot filler over the cooktop so you don't have to lug water from sink to stove. The possibilities really are endless.

Who are you cooking for?

Logically, the more people you cook for, the more space you need. For example, scrambled eggs for two require a much smaller pan than for seven. The bigger the family, the more storage space




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required to accommodate bigger pans and more plates, glasses and dishes. To accomplish this, replace your cabinet shelves, which usually fill only two-thirds of the cabinet space, with full cabinet-size, roll-out trays.

Multi-generational households often eat a different times. A warming drawer will ensure that dinner's piping hot for everyone when they sit down to eat.

Who's doing the cooking?

Many households have one primary cook, but some make it a family affair. If you've got several people involved in prep work and cooking, think through organizing your space and tools around each person's most common tasks. For example, someone who does all the chopping should have a station near the sink to wash and dry fresh foods before prepping them.

Age makes a difference too. If you like getting the kids involved, consider purchasing activity towers like those made by Little Partners.

They give a safe perch from which little people can pour, measure and stir ingredients.

Older cooks or those with physical challenges require special considerations too. Incorporate an area where prep work can be done while seated. Add appliance lifts and roll-out trays to eliminate stooping and bending. You can even customize your cabinets to raise your dishwasher to a more accessible height.

Finally, are the cooks in your kitchen left or right handed? It seems simple, but it's so important for space planning. This can influence decisions like which side of the sink to put the dishwasher on or how to position a pull-out pantry or spice storage in relation to the cooktop.

How do you entertain?

How often and how many you entertain in your home should have a big impact on your kitchen planning. If your dinner parties are smaller - usually eight or less - the good news is, these don't require a lot of extra thought. If you're a

Martha wanna' be or the host for big family gatherings, there are a few things to keep in mind.

If you feed large groups, you most likely have the large platters and multiple sets of stemware, dinnerware and flatware to serve them with. You will need enhanced storage to accommodate your collection. Much of this can be handled in the kitchen, but you'll want to have an expert help you assess your space needs. Also, select a bottom freezer or French-door-style refrigerator to hold all those trays loaded with food. A side-by-side simply won't do the job.

Also consider how you like to serve meals. If you're plating your food or serving family style, plan for a warming drawer to keep plates pre-warmed and counter space to dish up dinner. If you're serving buffet style, you'll need more ample counter space and you'll want to consider traffic flow starting in the living area, to the start of the line, through the buffet to the dining area.

Those who entertain may also want to consider a wet bar from which

drinks can be served. A nearby wine refrigerator can keep your collection at just the right temperature. Cabinetry should be planned in the area to hold stemware and barware. If you have a catering staff assisting with serving and clean-up, you'll want to have a separate sink and dishwasher area that is out of view.

What else do you do in the kitchen?

Your kitchen is for cooking, eating and entertaining, but it's likely you and your family do a lot of other things there too - or wish you could.

If you're a music lover, you'll want your favorite artists to inspire your culinary creations. Ditch that crackly, old radio on the counter and ask your kitchen remodeler to incorporate some smart-home technology to control your musical accompaniment stove side. While you're at it, use the same technology to control your home's thermostat and security system.

If you feel you're missing out on all the fun while you're in the kitchen,

incorporate an island where the kids can play games while you cook. This is also a great way to supervise homework while you prepare dinner. Opening your kitchen up to a nearby living area is a tried-and-true solution that shouldn't be forgotten.

Because the kitchen is command central for so many homes, it's often where homeowners pay bills, check e-mail, coordinate schedules and make phone calls.

Some of these suggestions require major work, but sometimes a small change can make a world of difference. For example, if you read the paper every morning at breakfast, plan for a table that can handle you, your paper and the rest of the family. And, an often forgotten feature is lighting. When you're reading, well-designed lighting can make all the difference.

What will make it feel uniquely yours?


All the useful, functional features discussed will make a world of difference in making your kitchen

more attuned to your unique lifestyle. But sometimes you need that extra-personal touch.

This is where it gets fun. Subtle touches with creative flair can make a kitchen truly yours. For one of my company's clients, a local artist created a backsplash that incorporated a contemporary design suited to the homeowner's sensibilities, that also, very subtly, included the names of his children. For this single dad's kids, this special touch told them how important they are in his life.

Another local couple with a love for Star Wars and collecting old View-Master viewers reflected their passion for all things retro by adding a diner booth and an old-style fridge to their kitchen.

Whether it's the backsplash, a drawer-pull choice, framed children's artwork or a dog food drawer for a beloved pooch, these kinds of touches can really make your kitchen feel like home.

Most importantly, not just any home ... but your home. 



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