

The Home Designer

Kitchen Aid - Remodeling 101

By Brandon Neff

Kitchen remodel – two words, when used together, strike fear in the hearts of men and women alike. Granite vs. marble, wood vs. tile, eco-friendly vs. everything else – deciding where to begin can be overwhelming. There are more products and options than ever before. Add in all those enviable shelter magazine spreads of luxury kitchens from across the globe, and it'll leave you ready to call it a day and go live in a yurt. Don't despair. Getting the look you want just takes a bit of planning and knowing where to spend the money. When to go for the splurge, and where to conserve is the key to a successful project.

Let's be clear, a kitchen makeover doesn't have to break your budget. Sure, it can be stressful, but creating a beautiful and functional space can, and should, be an exercise in creativity and fun. Yes, fun! When I begin a new project, I always take a beat to remind my clients that to be in a position to remake a space in your home exactly to your specifications is truly a luxury and to savor the experience. Enjoy the process, choose wisely, hire great help and always invest in the best you can afford. And, remember, with the housing market in the Bay Area heating up, nothing sells a home more than a beautiful kitchen, hands down. Most kitchen remodels, when planned well, will return over 90 cents of every dollar spent.

With that said, achieving the kitchen of your dreams takes work. Solid planning and sourcing is important from the start, so you can make informed decisions. To that end, whether you're a traditionalist, or a modernist, I'm here to guide you through some of the simplest and easiest ways to get the look you want – high or low.

For starters, it is essential to establish a budget, and stick to it. Know what you're comfortable spending, and understand that without proper planning you will go over budget. Begin by taking inventory of what you plan to replace, what can be recycled and what, if anything, can be repurposed. For most, the need for more space, more storage and a more efficient layout are the genesis for a remodel. Take a look around your room. Do you like the overall placement of the appli-



Glamorous details like the custom mosaic backsplash bring the space to life.

Photo Brandon Neff Design

ances? What condition are your cabinets? Can you recycle the existing cabinet boxes and just replace the door faces and hardware? What does the flooring look like? What about lighting? Make a list of what works and what needs to go. Hint: keeping the plumbing and gas/electrical in its current location will save you thousands.

Next, consider the style of your home. Respecting the architecture of the house will go a long way toward guiding your decisions. Look for clues such as moldings, period details and building materials. Not

that you can't mix styles within the home, but I've rarely seen it done well. Now, decide which items are a priority. Is that Sub-Zero fridge at the top of your list, or would you rather have new Caesar Stone counters? Are you a weekend gourmand who needs a chef's range and marble baking slab, or will a more modest cooktop and butcher block serve your needs? Knowing your bottom line is paramount to getting a great result.

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