Top 9 Things to Consider When Designing Your New Kitchen
When people start a kitchen remodeling project, they’re often excited and anxious at the same time. It’s fun to design a new space and select colors, fixtures and more. But, the remodeling process is lengthy and takes a lot of hard work. To ensure you get a beautiful kitchen exactly as you envision, within the time frame and budget you expect, follow these nine steps:
Step 1: Think about Your Requirements

Before you look at any magazines or meet with a remodeling contractor, you must think about how you use your kitchen. It’s a good idea to start with a “pros and cons” list. What do you like and dislike about your current kitchen? The final list will give you a good idea of what you need in your new kitchen.

To further flesh out your list, think about what’s important to you. Do you and any other members of the family like to cook? What about entertaining? Who typically gathers in your kitchen and what do they do while they’re there?
Is your existing footprint sufficient for all your activities, or is your kitchen space cramped? When you nail down how you’ll use your kitchen, you can determine an appropriate size and efficient layout.

Next, think about the fun stuff – colors, feel, style. Now’s the time to look for ideas. Check out websites, showrooms, books, magazines, blogs and more. You’ll find an overwhelming number of resources to stimulate your creativity! Hang on to the ideas you like in a file or scrapbook.

The goal of this step is to figure out what you need in your new kitchen, based on your family’s lifestyle and preferences. You want a high-level view first. The next step will get into details.
Step 2: Plan Your Project

Take your needs and desire list from above and start to develop the scope of work. These first two steps aren’t cast in stone, so really take the time to think things through. You’ll probably have to make adjustments and trade-offs based on budget, availability or other factors. So try to cover all your bases with what you really need, then what you’d love to have.

Do a rough drawing of your existing kitchen floor plan. You can use DIY software or good old pen and paper for this step. Incorporate as much information as you can about window, door, heating, plumbing, electrical outlet locations. Then, make a detailed list of what you want in your new kitchen:
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- **Space** – Will you use the rework existing layout or add square footage?
- **Style** – Will you maintain existing overall design style or re-vamp? How will a new style blend with the rest of your home’s design elements?
- **Activities** – Determine uses such as cooking (light, family, gourmet, baking, entertaining), dining (small groups, large groups, formal, outside of kitchen), other (office, crafts, homework, TV, etc.).
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- **Storage** – Think about space for food, beverages, cookware, dishes and serving items, pet food, misc. supplies, cleaning products, etc.

- **Types of Storage** – Do you want a pantry, base cabinets (slide outs, lazy Susan, racks, drawer systems), wall cabinets, wall racks, ceiling mounted racks, etc.?

- **Physical Properties** – What’s your preferred cabinet style, cabinet door surface, cabinet door style, countertop surface, backsplash surface, flooring, sink material and configuration, fixture type and material? Include plans for ventilation, lighting, large appliances, small appliances and more.
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Step 3: Determine the Dollars Needed

This usually isn’t a fun step because oftentimes you get the wind taken out of your sails when you start affixing costs to each element of your dream kitchen. But a budget needs to be done. Before you meet with your kitchen remodeling contractor, you have to get a sense of what you can afford and where you’ll get the money to pay for the project.

A major determining factor in how much you should invest is how long you plan to stay in your current home. If it’s not past a few years, be sure you don’t get carried away and exceed the average home price for your neighborhood. You want a good return on investment for your kitchen remodel. On the flip-side, if you expect to stay in your home for the long haul, you can spend whatever you can afford to create your ideal kitchen.
Next, figure out how you’re going to pay for the remodel. Will you use your savings and pay cash? Or, will you pay for the project with a home equity loan or other type of financing? Some homeowners use a combination of the two sources.

Whatever figure you come up with, add a reasonable contingency amount. Professionals recommend 10% be added for any surprises during construction. To keep your budget on track, you can make trade-offs where prudent, minimize any changes you may want to make after the project begins and stick to your budget!
Step 4: Find a Qualified Kitchen Remodeling Contractor

With your preliminary work, you’re ready to select your contracting partner. Recommendations from family, friends and neighbors help get the ball rolling. Then, do your own research to get the best qualified remodeling contractor for your project.

You may want to zero-in on remodeling contractors with professional designers on staff. Referred to as design/build contractors, they can simplify the process and offer a “one-stop-shop” for your project. You’ll have a company to manage your project from start to finish, including helping you with permits, HOA approvals, planning, budget finalization, finishes and fixtures selection, and more.
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Here’s a list of questions compiled by the National Association of the Remodeling Industry you should ask a prospective contractor:

- **How Long Have You Been in Business?** You want an established history, a current copy of their license and their certification of insurance.

- **What is the Time Frame for Starting the Project?** Ask how busy they are and when they estimate completing your job.

- **How is Your Firm Organized?** Find out how many employees they have on staff, which subcontractors they’ll use and if they’ll assign a project supervisor.
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• **How Many Similar Projects Have You Completed in the Past 12 Months?** You want to hire a company that’s done a project similar to yours. Checking recent work is critical since staffing and subcontractor changes can affect quality.

• **What Percentage of Your Business is Repeat or Referral Business?** Obviously, you want a bunch of happy camper customers!

• **May I Have a List of References?** Three seems to be the minimum number experts recommend. Visiting a job in progress is important as well.
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Step 5: Finalize the Contract

With your contractor on board, it’s time to finalize the contract. The most important thing you can do at this point is not pay any company more than 30% of the total project cost upfront. Many, many homeowners make this mistake only to learn a valuable lesson.

Your initial deposit will cover the cost of materials to get the project started. But, no reputable contractor will ask for more than one-third of the estimated cost. You can work out a payment schedule for the remainder of the cost according to project milestones. Also make sure you get all work finished before making the final payment.
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The contract document must fully detail the scope of work and all terms regarding the working arrangement. Some specifics include:

• Material list with models, brands, sizes, colors and anything else needed to describe in detail what will be used in your project.

• Detailed description of what the contractor will do and not do, including site cleanup tasks.

• Planned start and completion dates, along with the anticipated duration of each project phase.

• Total project cost and payment schedule.
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- Change order process. Anytime you or the contractor makes a change, it must be in writing and signed by both parties. Make sure you understand cost and schedule ramifications of all changes.

- Cancellation policy, including penalties.

- Full or limited warranty for materials and workmanship. The warranty should be for a minimum of one year and include contact information for the parties responsible.

- A binding arbitration clause. Resolving legal disputes in court is costly. Therefore, you want to avoid litigation whenever possible.
Step 6: Design Your Kitchen Space

Working with your contractor’s designer can help you with new ideas, as well as avoid any problems down the road. An accomplished designer will be well versed in tricks of the trade, like how to maximize space and get the desired look without spending a fortune.

You’ll work with your designer to determine fixtures and finishes. Decisions include brand, model, type, style, finish, color and more for cabinetry, countertops, major appliances, sinks and faucets, light fixtures, flooring, backsplash, hardware and any other elements of your project.
A professional designer will also know how to give you a safe kitchen. He or she should pay particular slip-resistant flooring, appropriate lighting, easy-to-reach appliances and cabinets, and other factors to enhance your family’s well being.

The goal during this step is to end up with a stylishly designed kitchen that meets your requirements for safety, function and comfort. To ensure you accomplish these things, the designer should provide initial drawings depicting space layouts, floor plans and elevations. Some contractor design departments will provide color and 3D conceptual computer renderings so you can more easily visualize your finished project.
Step 7: Prepare Final Design and Construction Documents

Now’s the time to complete your design and have your contractor prepare final construction drawings for permitting purposes. You’ll also get final cost figures for your project. And, the schedule will be updated as needed.

However, the schedule can only be estimated since you need to submit your documents for permits. Your contractor should handle the permitting process with the necessary county, municipalities and/or HOAs.

Once your permits are issued, you and your contractor can select a date to begin work. Your kitchen remodeling contractor should also review the construction process with you and update the scope of work.
Step 8: Survive the Construction Chaos

While you’re waiting for your permits, you can prepare for demolition. Depending on the scope of your project, your may have your work cut out for you!

You’ll need to clean the construction area, including taking stuff out of cabinets, drawers, closets, appliances and more. The items you remove will need to be stored somewhere else. And if you’ll live in the home during construction, you’ll need to set up a temporary kitchen.
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In addition, make sure you understand all parameters of the construction phase. If your contract doesn’t cover issues like frequency of meetings, dust mitigation, debris removal, daily start and stop times for the working crew, rules for working in your home and anything else, you’ll need to clarify these things with your contractor. Finally, plan to keep children and pets safely away from the work area.
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During construction, make sure you have frequent and open communication with your contractor. Establishing a “communication center” in your home will help facilitate communication. This area can be used to leave messages among you, your project manager and project foreman.

The better prepared and organized you are, the better you’ll be able to cope with the mess and disruption that are by-products of any construction project.
Step 9: Head Down the Home Stretch!

Before your project is completely finalized and you make your last payment, you need to review a “punch list.” This list represents issues you notice during a walk-through of the finished work with your kitchen remodeling contractor. If work hasn’t been completed, or needs to be fixed or changed, you will add each item to the punch list.

Make sure you get completion dates from your contractor for each item. When aspect of the project is done to your satisfaction, you can declare the project finished and issue your last contractor payment.
Welcome to the Dream Assurance Plan™

Republic West Remodeling makes the kitchen remodeling process as painless as possible. With over 18 years in business, we’ve learned a thing or two about how to efficiently complete projects to every customer’s expectation. And our testimonials, references and track record back this up.

We’ve also developed the Dream Assurance Plan™, a custom remodeling process that strives to deliver a pleasant experience and a successful outcome for our customers. We’re determined to transform the expectations that every remodeling project will be a nightmare.
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The Dream Assurance Plan includes three concepts:

• Design & Visualization

• Cost Certainty

• Time Certainty

Republic West Remodeling assures your custom remodeling project will be as you visualized throughout the entire process – from creative design to detailed planning to execution and construction.

For more information on kitchen remodeling, or to request a free, no obligation, design consultation, visit [http://www.republicwestremodeling.com/remodeling-and-construction.php](http://www.republicwestremodeling.com/remodeling-and-construction.php) or call (480) 428-2695.
About The Author

Jim Weisman is owner of Republic West Remodeling, an Arizona-based company specializing in home remodeling: kitchens, bathrooms, room additions, outdoor living spaces and more. For more information about Home Remodeling, visit http://www.republicwestremodeling.com today.