

Smart Spending for Your Kitchen Remodel

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Almost all of us at times come up against the reality that our Dom Perignon taste can't be accommodated on a Two-Buck-Chuck budget. So the first step to smart spending for a major remodel is to set a realistic budget for the overall cost that you can afford without robbing the kids' college fund. Also you may wish to consider resale value. A good rule of thumb is to invest 15% of the home's value in a kitchen remodel, for which you can generally expect a return of approximately 70% or more when you sell your house. Whereas a dilapidated kitchen can really hinder the sale of the home, customers have often told us that their beautiful kitchen is what sold their home.

To keep costs from spiraling out of control, your budget must address all aspects of a kitchen – cabinets, counters, appliances, flooring, lighting, plumbing & electrical, labor for demolition, contractor fees (including fees for building permits), and the unexpected. On average, 35% to 40% of your budget will go toward cabinetry, 20% to 30% for appliances, 20% to 25% for counters, 10% to 15% for flooring and 5% to 10% for lighting and electrical. Then, contracting labor for demo and installation will usually add about 30% over the materials cost. But if you're planning mechanical changes such as moving plumbing, moving or removing walls, or adding square footage, your contracting budget will need to be higher.



Once you've allocated your budget to all items, look around as much as possible at products that interest you. Get bids on these items to see if they fit your price range. You'll sometimes find that a certain "look" you prefer in a product is available in a similar style at a lower price point. This process also gives you a sense of the knowledge and integrity of the vendors you visit. Consider what will provide the best value for your situation, and don't forget that good customer service is equally important as price.

Once you have finalized those product decision, it is crucial to have well-written and clear contracts with all parties supplying items or labor for your project. The contract should spell out the extent of work, spec's of purchased materials, and

conditions in which the work will progress. This will help you avoid costly mistakes and is a critical step in maintaining your budget. These contracts help make up the master plan of your remodel – allowing you to plan each step in advance.



Be sure to work with appropriate professionals--architects, kitchen designers, general contractors, engineers, appliance salespeople, and others. Do not rush through the design process. This is the time to make your decisions and think and rethink your choices. It's much easier to change an idea on paper than after it's in production. Your designer should provide drawings of the kitchen, sketches of different possibilities, and samples of the materials they are proposing. This is where a design showroom becomes so handy – you can basically test-drive the cabinets, counters, appliances and other elements before ordering.

Of course, there's also the personal value and enjoyment you'll derive from having the perfect kitchen – the heart of your home—and you can't put a price tag on that!

