

“How To Survive a Kitchen Remodel”

by Lee Anna O’Daniel & Sarah Day

Begin your remodeling project by planning ahead! A coherent master plan will save you many headaches over the course of the remodel.

So, what should be in your plan? First define your goals – do you want to rearrange all the appliances and move the plumbing, do you want to pull down a wall or expand beyond the existing house? If so, you have a bigger project on your hands than someone who just wants new counters and cabinet pulls. Next, research ideas & materials. Look through magazines and books on design, be aware of what your friends and neighbors have done in their homes, and visit your local design showrooms. Think about how you use your kitchen – how many people use the kitchen at once, what are your dream appliances, do you want a second sink? Create your wish list and maybe note the things you don’t like too.

Now’s the time to seek out the design professionals you will employ. If you plan to alter the exterior of you home, you will want either an architect or a very experienced draftsman. He/she will make structural plans that can be submitted to the city or county for your building permit. If you are moving only interior walls the person to start with is the kitchen designer. The kitchen designer will help you decide what walls to move and how far to move them and then design the layout of the cabinetry and appliances. The layout will be driven by your wish list, industry standards and aesthetics. Your kitchen designer will want to work closely with the qualified general contractor of your choice to bring the design to reality.

The general contractor provides a wide scope of construction knowledge, contacts with the local building department, relationships with the necessary sub-contractors (appliances, cabinetry, electrical, plumbing, etc.), and most importantly functions as a problem solver. You can expect unknowns to crop up during your remodel project (dry rot, out-of-level floors or ceilings, leaky plumbing, etc.) – the contractor handles these problems before they can stymie the whole project. He also assures you that the work done will be up to code. It is definitely possible for a do-it-yourselfer to take on a remodel; just remember that you will have to address all the areas usually handled by a general contractor by yourself. Are you up to that? If so, go for it!



Don’t schedule your project too tightly – leave a buffer zone between sub-contractor appointments and try not to schedule more than one trade at a time. Even if you think that the window guy won’t conflict with the painter in the other room, they will probably end up stepping on each other and it will slow them both down. Be sure to confirm expected delivery dates – sinks, appliances, cabinetry, etc. Some people are more comfortable if all purchased items are on site prior to demo. Usually this is not necessary if you are working with reputable professionals, but it would bring peace of mind if you are the nervous sort.

During the construction process be prepared for some chaos and mess. Allow yourself a couple of days to pack up the kitchen prior to demo – this will reduce stress. Be prepared to live without a kitchen sink & major appliances for several weeks. You may want to pre-cook and freeze some meals beforehand. Many meals can be made with the microwave, your crock-pot or even the outdoor BBQ. Set up a temporary mini kitchen somewhere else in the house with your current refrigerator, microwave, crock-pot & other small appliances. Hopefully you are lucky enough to have another sink available (perhaps in the laundry room), otherwise, now is the time for paper plates and disposable knives and forks!



As the remodel progresses you will see the fulfillment of your master plan. Above all, be flexible and maintain your sense of humor – the end product will be worth the effort you are putting into it.



