

Small Kitchen Solutions



Kitchen remodeling ranks among the most popular remodeling projects each year, as kitchens have become the functional and social hubs for many families.

Almost every kitchen has a design flaw or something that can be changed to make the space more workable. However, no challenge is quite as difficult as reworking a small kitchen space.

If you are on a tight budget, have building restrictions, or own a condominium where you must work with the space allotted, you do have options to transform your kitchen.

Appliances

New appliances can serve to update and unify a room. All stainless steel appliances are becoming more popular, and not just in contemporary homes.

Energy efficiency is a key factor to keep in mind when purchasing home appliances, but the energy efficiency of similar appliances can vary significantly. It is usually more cost-effective to purchase household appliances with high efficiencies.

Built-in ovens, microwaves and storage for small appliances will make your kitchen appear less cluttered.

For homeowners who entertain regularly the kitchen wine refrigerator has become very popular. These appliances can accommodate from 12 to 300 wine bottles depending on the model. There are even countertop fridges to keep just a few bottles at a time properly chilled.

Counter Space

Even large kitchens are difficult to work in if there isn't enough counter space. Plan to cover as much of the area not occupied with appliances with countertops. If the difference in floor space is a matter of a few square feet, plan your design with deeper counters.

Granite, marble and stainless steel are the most expensive options, with laminate on the lower end of the spectrum and everything else falling somewhere in between.

For homeowners who use their kitchens frequently, different materials will enable a better cooking environment. For example, marble and granite offer cool surfaces for handling dough

while the butcher block allows one to easily chop and prepare food. And, if you like both, you don't have to choose. It's becoming more and more popular to combine counter options to create a unique look and a more functional kitchen.

Storage

Squeeze as many cabinets into your design as possible. Think about the placement of cabinets in relation to appliances, also. Deep cabinets that can hold plates should be located near the dishwasher, and large cabinets with slide-out drawers should be placed near the oven. The fewer unnecessary steps needed to complete a task, the smoother the function of your kitchen will be.

Waist-high sliding shelves that hold mixers and toasters can quickly get small appliances out of sight, but keep them easily at hand. Built-in storage for foods like potatoes and onions, and bread storage cabinets will also give the kitchen a cleaner look.

Roll-Out Pantry

If there isn't enough room for a closet pantry, many cabinet manufacturers now make roll-out pantries. These can be pulled out to view the items you have, but rolled back into a space about 18 inches wide and 5-1/2 feet tall. If there isn't room for any type of pantry, consider converting a closet outside of the kitchen to a storage area for fine china, large pots and infrequently used items.

Lighting

One easily overlooked design element is good lighting. Under-counter lighting and clean halogen lights can make the space appear larger and more comfortable.

Sinks

A small kitchen does not have to have a small sink. A large sink will make it easier for you to clean large pots and pans, and is a great place to stash the dirty pots before you have a chance to rinse them. If you are in an apartment or a small house, a large sink in the kitchen can serve double duty as a utility sink, too.

Some other ideas to increase the efficiency of your kitchen:

- Put a wire basket on the inside of the cabinet to hold trash bags and other frequently used items. These store-bought products are affordable and easy to install on the back of the cabinet door or under the sink.
- Mount an instant hot water heater on the sink. This is something small that makes a big difference. Installing such a device will usually replace the sprayer or soap. This could be really useful if you indulge in a cup of tea or instant coffee each day.
- Install a tile back splash on all the walls above the counters, stove and sink. This can quickly change the look of the kitchen and make it easier to clean.
- Change the cabinet and drawer knobs. This is a very simple and affordable option that will give the kitchen an extra special touch. There are a lot of unique designs out there, so be prepared to use your creative side.