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Dollars & Sense

When it comes to satisfying the value-driven consumer, kitchen designer Christie Board has a winning strategy



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DOLLARS AND SENSE

Ways to meet homeowners' demands for value in their kitchen and bath remodels

Remodelers and kitchen

designers from both coasts and everywhere in between are saying the same thing: When it comes to kitchen remodels, "clients want the biggest bang for their buck." No news there, but now, with the continued perception — or reality, in many cities — of a shaky economy and tight lending environment, consumers at every level are more value-driven than they have been in the past decade, seeking "safe" projects that will hold value for resale.

To get clients what they want for their kitchens, "focus less on

[individual] pricing and more on the budget," advises Monique Flesher, an interior designer and the owner of Custom Design By Monique, in Salt Lake City. Up-front discussion and getting good budget numbers can help determine the best design.

Luckily, design trends are making it easier to stay within budget. "People want a cleaner look," says Kim Holmberg, a designer with Lecy Bros. Homes & Remodeling, in Minneapolis. That translates into less fussy woodwork, "getting away from raised-panel cabinetry and going to a Shaker style door, which

saves money," she says.

Kathryn O'Donovan, designer with Normandy Remodeling, in Hinsdale, Ill., agrees that establishing a budget early in the process helps designers guide homeowners toward smart decisions. She sees assisting clients with value-engineering as a key role for remodelers.

But in the end, notes Ron Klassen, owner of Wallner Builders, in Milwaukee, "What's important to one person doesn't mean diddly to another. That's what's cool about remodeling; it's the details that make the difference."

| BY NINA PATEL WITH STACEY FREED |

Kitchen Control

Though most homeowners committed to working with a designer appreciate the value of good design, kitchen and bath designer Christie Board says that they still want the best return for their investment. She points out that the renovated kitchen shown here looks more expensive than it actually is. Read on for tips about making your clients' remodeling dollars go further.



Christie Board is a kitchen and bath designer and co-owner, with her husband, Robert Board, of Board by Board, in Prescott, Ariz., a new-home construction and remodeling company.



Cabinets

The owners of this kitchen chose price-friendly knotty alder cabinets but splurged on a contrasting darker distressed finish for the island, which has more of a furniture feel.

Countertops

Board says that using a lower-level granite, such as the Level I she used in this kitchen, can save \$1,000 or more compared to a Level III or higher product, which is more expensive. The more movement and pattern there is in the stone, or how unusual the color is and the stone's rarity, affect the level it is assigned, and therefore the cost.

Appliances

The 30-inch-wide range and twin 32-inch-wide refrigerator and freezer are from Frigidaire's Professional Series. The fridge and freezer have a similar built-in look to luxury brands but cost just over \$2,000 each. Board also saved money by installing the Panasonic microwave in a cabinet rather than building it in. Though it lacks a trim kit, this creates a more custom look.

Photos top, Larry Kantor; left, Jason Mizian



Hardware

Just changing the cabinet hardware can make a dramatic difference with minimal cost and effort, says Lecy Bros. Homes designer Kim Holmberg, who will often show clients how to do this themselves to save money.

Backsplash

Board used a closeout sale tile for the backsplash. She says that the decision to keep the backsplash low was a design decision, not a cost-cutting measure — she didn't want to have a large expanse of the textured tile because she felt it would make the area look too "heavy."

Flooring

Concrete floors run about \$7 per square foot. In this kitchen, the concrete company that did the floor charged \$3.50 per square foot to pour the floor, and the homeowners saved the additional \$3.50 per square foot by staining it themselves. Installing a midrange tile floor would have cost about \$9 to \$10 per square foot.

Cabinets

- Simple door styles and construction are more cost-effective: partial versus full overlay; flat panels versus raised panels. As luck would have it, **the recent trend toward "the contemporary style and cleaner Craftsman look is also a very cost-effective way to design and build,"** notes Holmberg.
- For a 60-inch-wide space, Lori Krengel, owner of Kitchens by Krengel, in St. Paul, Minn., recommends using two 30-inch cabinet boxes instead of one 30-inch and two 15-inch boxes and using dividers and accessories to organize items in these larger boxes.
- Several designers mentioned cost-effective alder as an alternative to cherry or maple. Katie Hurst, showroom manager at Hurst Total Home, in Centerville, Ohio, says that alder has a similar grain pattern and accepts stain almost like cherry.
- **Cabinet finishing is the first place to save money,** says Jeff Kida, of DDS Design Services in suburban Chicago. Painted and glazed finishes are more expensive than stain.
- Open shelves save on cabinetry costs.
- "In the same location where you might have a base cabinet and wall cabinet you can have a tall pantry-style cabinet, instead," says Andrew Forman, an architect at Legacy Design Build, in Scottsdale, Ariz. "Give clients storage spaces that function better in the same locations."
- Check for manufacturer incentives and rebates.
- Consider refacing the cabinets (see "Refacing Options" on page 59).

Appliances

- Check in your supplier's scratch-and-dent room or for marked-down appliances from last year, says Board,

which are often still under warranty.

- See if manufacturers are offering rebates or packages.
- Instead of installing “trophy” stoves or ranges, **ask homeowners to be realistic about their needs and to choose an appliance that fits their lifestyle**, says Molly McCabe, founder of A Kitchen That Works, in Bainbridge Island, Wash.
- If clients cook often, help them invest in good equipment, and maybe cut back on storage, which in kitchens “is not as important as the ability to cook,” says Emily Bourgeois of DeRhodes Construction, in Charlotte, N.C. The clients are better off updating during a remodel and not waiting to buy later. “It’s hard to say that the space you create today will fit the appliances in the future,” says Leey Bros.’ Holmberg. “Plus, newer appliances are a lot more efficient than appliances that were available even 10 years ago — another money saver.”
- Hide an inexpensive refrigerator or microwave in a nearby pantry (see “Hidden Side” on page 59).



Granite Look

The “amore” profile on this laminate island resembles ogee-edged granite — at a much lower cost.

Countertops

- Granite remains popular for kitchen countertops, and there are cost-effective options to consider with this material, too. Slabs with simple edges, such as square eased edges instead of an ogee profile, are less expensive than detailed profiles, says Normandy Remodeling’s Kathryn

1.43

million metric tons of granite

were imported by the U.S. in 2011. Imports make up 80% or more of all domestic dimensional stone use. The biggest source countries are Brazil, China, India, and Italy.

O'Donovan, adding that **another budget option is to use a detail profile on just the island**, not the entire kitchen. Monique Flesher, of Custom Design By Monique, also suggests “installing granite tile instead of a slab in countertops and doing your grout $\frac{1}{16}$ of an inch.” She usually uses 12x12 granite tile for a countertop.

- Quartz is another option that is a little more cost-effective than granite, but the look is different, so it depends on the clients’ preference.
- “There are great looking laminates out there,” Board says. “If you do a rolled edge full 180 bullnose and pair it with a fun stone backsplash, it can look great.” Hurst says that Formica’s 180fx collection uses images of real granite and stone. And McCabe adds that Wilsonart’s High Definition faux stone products look “so realistic that you have to be within five feet of them to realize you’re looking at laminate. You get the stone look, but not the stone costs” (about \$35 to \$40 per square foot in her Bainbridge Island, Wash., area).
- Some of Hurst’s clients are choosing quartz or granite for the island and high-definition laminate that looks like stone for the perimeter. McCabe says that granite stands out more when you use it in a special area such as an island.

Flooring

- Hurst uses a commercial-grade vinyl tile, which she says is glued down piece by piece. Depending on the size of the space, the labor cost is \$4 to \$5 per square foot less than ceramic tile.
- Kida stands by LVT — luxury vinyl tile — which can be glued down or placed over an existing floor. Or, he says, “You can use a floating laminate or floating vinyl that has a rich look.” The slightly higher costs on these are outweighed by their longevity. “You can get 10 to 20 years out of them,” Kida says.
- O'Donovan uses oak as a cost-effective wood species for floors, and says that finishing the product on site is also budget-friendly.
- Upo, an engineered wood snap-together floor, is available in different species and patterns. “It’s a bit pricier



Faux Wood

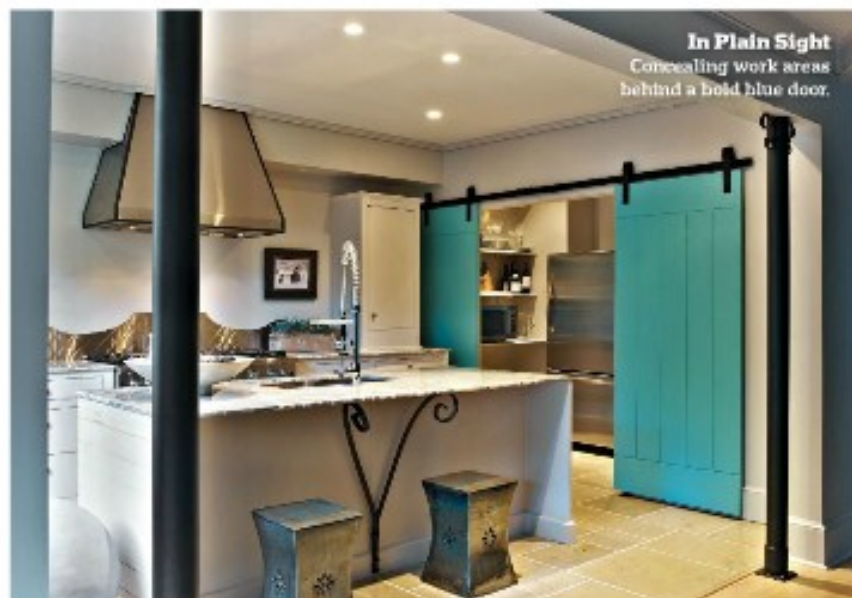
Manufacturer Karndean’s wood-effect vinyl flooring looks realistic and is durable.

than other choices on the market, but it has a 25-year warranty,” says Wallner Builders’ owner Ron Klassen, who also uses Mannington’s Adura, a manufactured tile.

Backsplash

- Check with your supplier for discontinued tile. **Use plain field tile with a few pieces, or one area, of more expensive accents.** Flesher suggests using one run of glass tile (instead of a whole wall) when using subway tile, and Hurst points out that mesh-mounted tile is less expensive than individual listellos or borders. She cuts up 12x12 mosaic sheets to create liners.

Creative Facades



Hidden Side

Homeowners want kitchens that are part of an open living space, and designers such as Eddie DeRhodes, of DeRhodes Construction, in Charlotte, N.C., are getting more savvy about creating a working kitchen that still blends with the living area. In this townhouse project (above), DeRhodes and designer Emily Bourgeois came up with the idea of **creating a large working and storage area separated from part of the kitchen by a barn door.** Bourgeois describes it as “outside-the-box thinking” in what might be considered a traditional kitchen.

The main part of the kitchen that is open to the adjacent dining and living room is a quieter, more friendly place, says DeRhodes, and that’s where the gas range, dishwasher, and sink are located. The refrigerator, microwave, and other storage is in the pantry area, which has open shelves for easy access.

Refacing Options

Cabinet refacing is an economical way to dramatically change the look of the kitchen, says Lacey Bros. designer Kim Holmberg. She is seeing more clients — at every price point — go this route. But **refacing only makes sense if the box is well constructed and if the design calls for keeping appliances and maintaining the kitchen layout.** “The box itself has to be in good shape,” Holmberg says. “Most of the wear and tear is on the doors and the drawers, anyway, and that’s the part that can date a kitchen.”

She suggests using a reputable subcontractor that uses real wood — anything from cherry to alder to birch or maple — to do the job. (The cabinets shown below, left, are refaced with quarter-inch solid maple.) “Just like

anything else, you can find the guys that use laminates or the iron-on type of fake wood,” Holmberg says, “but I’m talking about ¼-inch solid hardwood that gets attached to the face and the box, so you essentially have a brand new solid cabinet.”

Typically, the refacer covers the cabinet box and stiles with wood, then replaces the doors and hinges and installs



new, matching molding. Most clients are changing out raised-panel doors with Shaker- or Craftsman-style flat panels with hidden hinges. Done well and with solid wood, “they look like custom-made cabinets,” Holmberg says. Add new hardware and “it’s a really inexpensive way to update.”

Projects can range from \$4,000 to \$10,000 depending on the number of cabinets, the wood species, and the number of unique angles. Instead of several weeks for a custom cabinet job, refacing takes four or five days. “It’s a really efficient process,” Holmberg says. “Refacers can transform just about anything.”

42% of architects surveyed in 2011 said their clients want kitchens that integrate with family space; up from 38% in 2010

American Institute of Architects (AIA) Home Design Trends Survey, Q4 2011

Value & Splurge

For this hall bath, Hurst Total Home, in Centerville, Ohio, worked with the client to select standard options for most areas, with a few "splurge" items

Medicine Cabinet

The client splurged on a Roborn PL Series medicine cabinet because she needed storage but wanted the mirror to be framed with a finish that matched the light and faucet.

Countertop

The countertop and backsplash are cultured marble — one of the most economical materials on the market. The 3-inch-high backsplash abuts the shower's tile border.

Vanity

The 36-inch vanity is a midprice product from Yorktowne. Hurst Total Home showroom manager Katie Hurst says that although painted finishes like this one are more expensive than stained cabinetry, they are more affordable for a small unit. The homeowner chose standard drawer glides rather than upgrading to full-extension, soft-close glides.



Tile

The client opted for some high-style for the shower tile: a combination of several brands of expensive tile. The field tile and 1x1-inch mosaic in the niches is Walker Zanger; the mosaic border and pale blue liner are from Sicis, and the picture frame border, turtle, and bubbles are from Sonoma.

Fittings/ Fixtures

The customer chose a Moen ShowHouse line faucet and shower fittings — an upgrade from the company's standard price point but not one of its higher-end lines. The Kohler toilet and American Standard are midprice point products.

Shower Solutions

Though homeowners are willing to spend a little more on master baths versus hall baths, they're still seeking value. **Many are replacing tubs or tub/shower combinations with a large shower.** Board by Board co-owner Christie Board tries to incorporate a few universal design elements such as a handheld shower and seat in her projects.

A Kitchen That Works founder Molly McCabe says that her clients are choosing framed rather than frameless shower doors for the cost savings they offer. However, designers agree that prefabricated shower units don't provide the flexibility needed for many remodels. "I would not consider that a savings," Board says. Here are three cost-effective alternatives for showers walls.



Reality Check

Dave Cerami of HomeTech Renovations likens the difference between stone and porcelain to leather and faux leather. This bath uses porcelain tile for the shower and floor.

Porcelain

Board recommends using porcelain instead of natural stone. "We can save both by price and by installation cost," she says, and in addition, homeowners appreciate having a low-maintenance product. She notes the availability of a range of "great looking porcelain and ceramics that look like real stone — you have to touch them to feel the difference." Normandy Remodeling's Kathryn O'Donovan says that her clients are moving away from stone to stone-look porcelain, which "has great graphics and looks very real."

Hurst has an area in her showroom where she has natural travertine and porcelain tile installed side-by-side on the floor. "If I didn't tell my clients that one was not stone, they would not know," she says. "The porcelain product is half the cost of the travertine, and it does not have to be maintained."



Solid Slabs

The walls in this shower designed by Molly McCabe are LG Hi-Macs acrylic solid surface. The niche is hand-seamed, but it's less expensive for the fabricator to install an applied niche.

Solid Surfacing

As part of the design process, McCabe walks clients through the maintenance requirements of different materials. "Most people lead busy lives," she says. "Maintenance is not something they enjoy." She sometimes uses ½-inch-thick solid surface slabs for shower and tub surrounds — usually in a neutral white or off-white. For showers, she prefers an acrylic shower base. This project features a ½-inch-thick trim in a contrasting color to finish the edges. McCabe says that showers with ½-inch-thick walls don't require trim for a finished look. On one project she had her fabricator route thicker solid surface walls to resemble tile, but that did increase the cost.

Cultured Marble

To add a little flair to shower walls, Hurst Total Home showroom manager Katie Hurst specifies custom-made cultured marble. She says it's much nicer than the cultured marble that most people are familiar with. Her local fabricator customizes the slabs for each client. "If you like a lot of movement, they swirl in more color," she says. Hurst takes homeowners to view and approve a sample slab before asking the fabricator to make all the panels. Since the molded product has no grout lines, it is low-maintenance, and the material can be repaired and repolished as needed.

Panel Swirl

The fabricator of these shower panels blended onyx with the cultured marble material. "It adds a translucent effect — it looks like chocolate swirls on the walls," Hurst says.



Photo: far left, William Thompson; top, courtesy HomeTech Renovations; left, courtesy Hurst Total Home



Remnant Rewards

For vanity countertops, Board suggests clients look at the products in the granite fabricator's remnant yard. She says this works especially well when the client goes in without any preconceived ideas of the look that he or she wants. "You can pick up a nice granite remnant for a few hundred dollars," Board says. And, according to Lori Krengel, of Kitchens by Krengel, remnants are also good for bars and mudroom desks. Board used a granite remnant to top this existing vanity and added a non-name-brand copper sink from a local supplier, a mid-price faucet, and a clearance listello.

78.9%
of house hunters

want a master suite, a feature
that ranks second to having a
garage/parking space

Zip Realty 2010 survey

Tub Skirts

Water Front

Eddie DeRhodes of DeRhodes Construction says that the wood face on this tub (right) makes it look like the fixture is freestanding — an example of the creative use of stock materials that designers use to stay within a client's budget. The horizontal wood boards were installed, primed, and painted on site. Since it's a soaking tub without a showerhead, the painted finish should provide enough protection from splashes of water.



Bath Wrap

David Cerami at HomeTech Renovations, in Fort Washington, Pa., used Azek PVC beadboard to create a skirt for this tub. "The

moisture-resistant trimboard can be painted and is stable in most wet environments," he says, a look well-suited to traditional designs.

Photos top, Justin Peck Photography; left, courtesy Board by Board; right, courtesy Home Tech Renovations