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The 6-step kitchen update

Story by Amy Smith

Historically the kitchen has been the heart and soul of the home. It's where we come together with our families to prepare and share meals, where we entertain our friends, where homework is completed and stories are told. The plan is always to create an inviting family room, but at the end of the day the kitchen is where everyone seems to congregate.

It is simple to improve the aesthetic value of most rooms without creating the chaos that comes with construction, but people frequently assume that it is difficult to make a significant impact in the kitchen without extensive remodeling. Once we start to consider the cost involved in renovating a kitchen, it suddenly becomes less of a priority. What many do not realize is that there are simple changes that can make a big impact without relocating cabinetry, plumbing or gas lines. Any one of the following suggestions will make a huge difference, and implementing all of them will make you feel like you have an entirely new kitchen.

Incorporating any of these tips in your kitchen will help bring your home up-to-date and create a more inviting atmosphere. Many homeowners wait to make these changes until they are preparing their home to sell. Implementing just one of these suggestions today will transform the heart of your home and give you the opportunity to enjoy your newly improved space before sharing it with prospective buyers.



1. Paint your cabinets.

Do you feel as though the current wood tone of your cabinets makes your entire kitchen look dated? Painting your cabinets can instantly wake up what once felt like a tired kitchen. If the thought of painting stained wood makes you cringe, keep in mind that you don't have to paint all of the cabinets. Maybe you can just paint the island, or leave the island stained and paint the perimeter cabinets.

2. Replace your countertop.

Some homeowners upgrade their countertops for the purpose of resale value, while others may want to enjoy it for years to come. When replacing your countertops, choosing one made of a solid surface material is always worth the investment. Solid surface materials include granite, quartz and marble, among others. While this will be a large portion of your budget, there is a huge variety of products available at a wide range of costs. Materials with an abundance of visual interest can come at a higher price. One way to keep costs down is to strategically place the more interesting material in areas that serve as focal points, such as the island. You can then complement this material with a more cost-effective product throughout the rest of the kitchen, while still maintaining cohesion.



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3. Add a backsplash. Creating a tile backsplash does not require a large amount of tile and is a way to make a serious impact when updating a kitchen. There are a multitude of decorative tile options available. Subway tile is one of the most popular backsplash tiles used today, both for its affordability and aesthetic value. Adding an interesting accent tile over the stove or as an accent strip throughout the backsplash is a way to introduce an alternative color or texture while staying under budget. Using the same solid surface that is used on your counter as a backsplash is an excellent option as well. This is a material that is easy to maintain, as it does not have any grout lines.

4. Add decorative lighting. Rather than adding another hole to your ceiling, refit an existing recessed light to accommodate decorative pendant lighting over your island or sink. When shopping for lighting, be mindful of scale and the amount of light that the new fixture will emit in comparison to that to which you are accustomed.

5. Replace plumbing fixtures. Replace your current faucet with a more decorative model in an updated finish. Do not worry about all of the metal finishes being identical throughout your kitchen. Gone are the days of maintaining one finish. Feel free to choose something neutral and timeless, such as a brushed nickel on your plumbing fixtures, or introduce an oil-rubbed bronze or antique brass with lighting and hardware.

6. Replace your hardware. Replacing cabinet hardware is an opportunity to bring some personality into the space. Updating polished brass hardware with an oil-rubbed bronze, satin nickel or antique brass is simple and quickly will bring your kitchen up-to-date. Many retailers are selling unique glass, metal and even stone hardware that creates a one-of-a-kind kitchen. When shopping for hardware, keep in mind the quantity required to complete your kitchen. There are some highly decorative options on the market today that will instantly transform the style of your kitchen but can come with a big price tag. Consider using the more elaborate hardware on your island or bar and fill in with a less expensive option throughout the rest of the kitchen. This will create interest while remaining budget-conscious. ■