

DreamWork

KITCHENS

Bathrooms & Fine Cabinetry

The Kitchen & Bath Insider[®]

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How Much is that Kitchen in the Window?

Whether you're walking down the street passing by a kitchen showroom, or in a "home center" strolling the aisles, it's hard not to notice the stunning new kitchens on display. Your mind begins to drift...

You work hard. You're a good person. If anyone deserves a new kitchen, it's you. But then reality rears its ugly head. The pleasant vision of standing in your new kitchen, effortlessly preparing a gourmet meal, is replaced with a view looking out from the poor house. And so you walk on, regrettably abandoning the momentary dream of what you truly deserve.

It doesn't have to be that way. If you're inspired by those beautiful displays there are steps to follow that can lead to a new kitchen without sacrificing everything you hold dear. The most important of these steps is to determine the budget that you are comfortable with. More than ever before, there are cabinets, countertops and appliances available to fit into almost any budget.

If you're not sure what your budget should be, the general rule of thumb for a new kitchen is about 15% of the value of your home. (Of which you will recoup about 90% of the expense in a resale.) In our area, however, I think that 5% to 10% for a full renovation is a more realistic figure. This breaks down to include: design costs (5%), cabinets (40%), countertops (15%), appliances (15%), flooring (5%), fixtures (3%) and labor (17%). This, of course, is only an estimate, and will be affected by your choice of materials, the age of your home, and if you are making any structural changes to your house.

Once you've determined your budget you should deduct 10% of it and set it aside. Those funds will be your reserve for the unforeseen expenses that may arise during the project. If everything goes smoothly you can use that money towards your next trip to Foxwood. But, when planning a renovation, if you don't have a cushion it may create a hardship later on.

While determining a budget that you're comfortable with it's a good time to do your homework. Make one list of what you absolutely must have in your future kitchen and another "wish list" of things you'd like, but really could live without if necessary. Pick up some kitchen magazines in town and look through them. When you see something that interests you, tear it out and put it into a folder so that you can show it to your kitchen designer. It's easier and safer to show someone a specific concept than to try and explain it, leaving less chance for misinterpretation of what you have in mind.

Now it's time to meet with the kitchen designer. This specialist will review your ideas and then transform them into a working design, based on your basic needs, your "wish list" and your budget. Don't be afraid to share your budget with your designer, it is another tool that they will use to create your "Dream Kitchen". If you don't trust the person your working with enough to share this information, find another designer who you do trust. Whether your proposed expenditure is \$5,000 or \$100,000, if the designer does not know this, chances are their design will not meet your expectations and you'll have wasted both your time and theirs.

A creative designer, whom you've shared your innermost kitchen desires, should be able to produce an affordable, functional, and stunning new "dream" kitchen, just for you. You may have to compromise here and there (unless you have an unlimited budget) but the end result will be something that you not only can afford but be proud of as well. After all, you are a good person and who deserves a new kitchen more than you?