



The Kitchen & Bath Insider[®]

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What Would You Do if this Was Your Kitchen?

If I had a dollar for every time I was asked this question I would be writing this month's article on my yacht in the Carribean. Nevertheless, it is an excellent question, which I never get tired of answering, even though the answer is different each time it is asked. Before giving an answer, however, I must ask several questions of my own, relating to budget, lifestyle, family size, cooking habits, etc. Without the answers to my questions, the answer to yours cannot be accurate.

Whether your budget is limited or unlimited, in order to plan a successful renovation you must decide how much you are comfortable spending. Don't be afraid to share this amount with your designer, it is a tool that they will use to create your "Dream Kitchen". If you're not comfortable enough to share this information with the person you are working with, find another designer who you feel you can 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.

The budget for your project will determine whether a complete renovation is feasible or perhaps something a little less extensive should be considered. Even if your budget allows for a full renovation, the solution to your particular situation may not necessitate a complete make-over. Sometimes a new countertop and some internal cabinet accessories are all that is needed to change the look of your kitchen, and make it a more efficient work area as well.

If you're looking to change the look of your cabinets without replacing them there are many alternatives. Painting, refinishing and refacing are all methods of changing the appearance of your cabinetry that do not include the expense and headache of ripping out your old cabinets. Both painting and refinishing use your existing cabinet fronts but with refacing you get new door and drawer fronts that come in real woods like cherry, maple and oak; or easy-to-clean thermofoil laminate. The existing cabinets are then covered in a matching material to the new doors.

If you want to change the layout of your kitchen then you must consider a full remodel. Using advanced computer design systems a kitchen specialist can show you what your future kitchen will look like, designing and re-designing the plan with your assistance. Custom cabinets can be built to your exact specifications and are available in numerous styles, colors and wood species. You can also chose from semi-custom or economical stock cabinets to achieve your goal.

Knowing a family's lifestyle is also an important factor in designing a new kitchen. How many people live in your home? The number of occupants will help determine the storage needs for food and sizes of the appliances. Does the whole family sit together for meals? This information is necessary to calculate the space needed for eating meals. How many people prepare the meals? Minimum traffic patterns relate to how many people actually work in the kitchen at the same time. Do you have special dietary needs? If you keep a kosher kitchen you'll need extra storage space and perhaps a second dishwasher. Is your kitchen the main gathering place in your home (as it is in most homes)? If the kids do their homework in the kitchen a peninsula may offer the necessary space without using the kitchen table. The more time spent accurately answering these questions will help to create a kitchen that will give you years of pleasure.

So, when you ask, "What would you do if this was your kitchen?" don't expect a quick answer. Once you have given thought to your families needs, and share this information with your designer, only then will they be able to answer your question.

Alas, I'm writing this article, not on my imaginary yacht, but in my kitchen. But don't feel too bad for me, I'm more at home here, than out at sea.