



The Kitchen & Bath Insider[®]

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The Perfect Kitchen, or the Search for the Grail

If you haven't yet read *The DaVinci Code* by Dan Brown, go out and get it today. Filled with astonishing historical facts and riddled with hidden meanings, it's a wonderful mystery. Although not an avid mystery fan, (I usually miss the clues), I thoroughly enjoyed reading this book. And even with my limited literary ability, I could discern that the search for the Grail is a thinly disguised morality tale representing the search for the perfect kitchen. Dan Brown is a genius!

Since the dawn of time, a select group of dedicated artisans have devoted their lives to create perfect kitchens. Although I cannot divulge the name of this organization, (fearing for my life), I'll refer to them as "Kitchen Designers". Time after time, these masters have blended space and families, combining function and beauty, to create their masterpieces.

These "Kitchen Designers" have broken down a remodeling project into five distinct steps: planning, designing, preparation, construction and finishing touches. The age-old secret to creating the perfect scheme for your kitchen is *taking your time* during the planning and designing stages. The initial planning stage primarily involves your own research. Plan on spending several weeks doing your homework! Establish a budget that you're comfortable with (and then deduct 10% of it for unforeseen expenses). Next, analyze your existing situation and make a list of what you would like to change. Do you need more storage area? Do you need more counter space? What types of appliances would you like included in the new kitchen? What type of counter? What type of floor? Etc. Pick up some kitchen magazines and while browsing through them, tear out whatever interests you and put it into a folder to show your Kitchen Designer.

The design stage is really the key to success. During this period you need to interview and hire a designer and/or contractor. They will work with you to develop a detailed floor plan, combining both your ideas and their own, based on your budget and lifestyle. You'll also select the cabinets and finalize the choices of counters and appliances during this stage. **Do not rush this process!**

Although the space you've selected for your kitchen may have limitations, often, creative ideas can overcome these conditions. The National Kitchen and Bath Association publishes guidelines relating to overall design, clearances between appliances, work and walking spaces. These are available at their web site: www.NKBA.org.

Once the layout of the cabinets and appliances has been completed to your satisfaction its time to look inside each cabinet. Where are you going to put things? It makes more sense to carefully plan what's going where before the cabinets are in place, and if necessary, revise the design to accommodate your needs. Simple things, like the glasses being stored close to the dishwasher will save you valuable time, everyday, for the rest of your kitchen's life! Unlike plates, which can be stacked when moved, you can only carry two glasses at a time so store them within arm's length of the dishwasher.

Review the functionality of each cabinet, one by one. Roll-out trays are a great way to access the contents of a cabinet but they involve two steps; opening the cabinet doors and then pulling out the tray. Perhaps, you would be better served by a cabinet with large, pot and pan drawers, eliminating the step of opening the doors. Pull-out trash containers, lazy susans, and cutlery dividers are among the many other internal accessories, that when included in your cabinetry, will enhance your perfect kitchen.

Once your new kitchen has been built you'll be living with it for many, many years. So it pays to take the advice of the great "Kitchen Designers" and spend a little extra time planning it. That way you'll never have to say, "I wish I had thought of that before we installed the kitchen."