



THE BOLD LOOK  
OF KOHLER

When planning a new kitchen or renovation, it pays to keep an open mind and learn all you can. That includes busting a few common myths about the planning process and its outcomes. Read on to benefit from some real-world examples from kitchen-design professionals:

**Myth #1: “I can add that easily at a later time.”**

“[My client] insisted she didn’t need a microwave,” says Juliana Caitlin, a designer in Jacksonville, FL. “But when her husband was transferred and they had to sell the house, the missing microwave was a big issue among potential buyers, even those who admired her gorgeous cabinets.”

Designers say it’s best to add features to your new kitchen during, not after, renovation. Even if you’re not sure whether you’ll use a feature right away, prepare for its future installation by running cable and electrical lines. For example, one day, you, your growing kids, or a future homeowner may want a flat-screen television or a home-monitoring screen in the kitchen. Or, you may someday need more outlets on your counters and island.



Homeowners should install a variety of kitchen lighting fixtures throughout the kitchen, especially under-cabinet lighting, since it illuminates counter top space far better than overhead lighting alone. Also, don’t forget to consider aging issues. Wall ovens and drawer-style dishwashers will prove a plus if you develop back problems down the road.

**Myth #2: “I’m not having any clutter in my new kitchen.”**

One homeowner recently ripped out her crowded pantry to make room for a lovely butler area with glass-front cabinets. “Now she doesn’t have a pantry—and no place to store everyday dry goods and cereals,” says Laurie Smith, a designer in Woodridge, IL. “She thought she could adapt, but how can she when there’s insufficient storage space?”

Whether we like it or not, life is messy—in kitchens both new and old. That’s why adequate space to store it is essential. “The most common mistake among homeowners is that they want kitchens that open onto other rooms, and they don’t plan any upper storage for china and glassware,” Caitlin says. “There needs to be a balance between function and style.”

**Myth #3: “Bigger is always better.”**

Like so many homeowners, Ms. X finally got a massive kitchen for entertaining, but now she walks endlessly from one appliance to another. Caitlin says this is one mistake that homeowners have to live with for a long time, since kitchen renovations are done only once every 15 years or so. The solution, she says, is to install two sets of appliances, essentially integrating two work triangles into the kitchen area.

Most designers urge their clients to choose quality over quantity when designing a kitchen, particularly if money is an issue. “If a homeowner is over-budget on a huge kitchen and is forced to opt for 2-cm granite rather than 3-cm granite with a pretty dropped edge, she will be reminded of that decision every time she enters the kitchen,” Caitlin says.





Sarah Jenkins, a designer in Chevy Chase, MD, agrees, adding that it's possible to entertain up to 40 people "without trauma" in a smaller, efficient kitchen.

**Myth #4: "I don't need a designer."**

Ms. X put her builder in charge of renovating the kitchen of her old house. Unfortunately, the builder failed to inspect above the ceiling prior to starting work. Eventually, Ms. X had to hire a designer to help deal with the oven hood protruding from her ceiling molding, visible duct

work and a mishmash of cabinets of different sizes. A year later, the project still isn't complete.

Not every kitchen project requires a designer. But many of us need someone to help us see the big picture and oversee the entire project, including working within budget and coordinating the efforts of the architect and builder or contractor.

**Myth #5: "Yes, it will fit."**

One client insisted on putting an island in her new condo kitchen, although there was clearly not enough room for it. "She's trying to do what's popular without any thought to whether it would work in the space," Jenkins says. "Now, there's barely room to stand behind it to use the counter and you can't put anything on the adjacent wall except for a painting."

Human nature is tricky. We can unwittingly grow attached to our old appliances and end up with new refrigerators that are too small or with ovens that are short on burners. Or, we forget our physical limitations and opt for a sink bay window that's too deep or an island that's too huge to clean. Caitlin recommends that homeowners pay particular attention to aisle width, which should be between 42" and 48". "If there's too little space, you're stuck if someone lowers the door of the oven, dishwasher or microwave," she says.



**Myth #6: "I want what she has."**

It's tempting to follow the latest trends, but it pays to be practical. Do you really want your friend's painted cabinets when they risk water damage near your sink? Will you tire of that popular granite color? Will you still love antique glazed cabinets in 10 years? Will that funky kitchen featured in that glossy magazine really work in your house?

Considering the scope of a kitchen renovation, it's best to proceed cautiously. "Homeowners get carried away when they see someone else's home or a kitchen showroom," says Jenkins. "They go bounding off and buy things without thinking of the rest of the house. Usually the kitchen is the first room they do during a home renovation and it dictates the colors for the rest of the house—for what seems like forever. It's a huge investment."