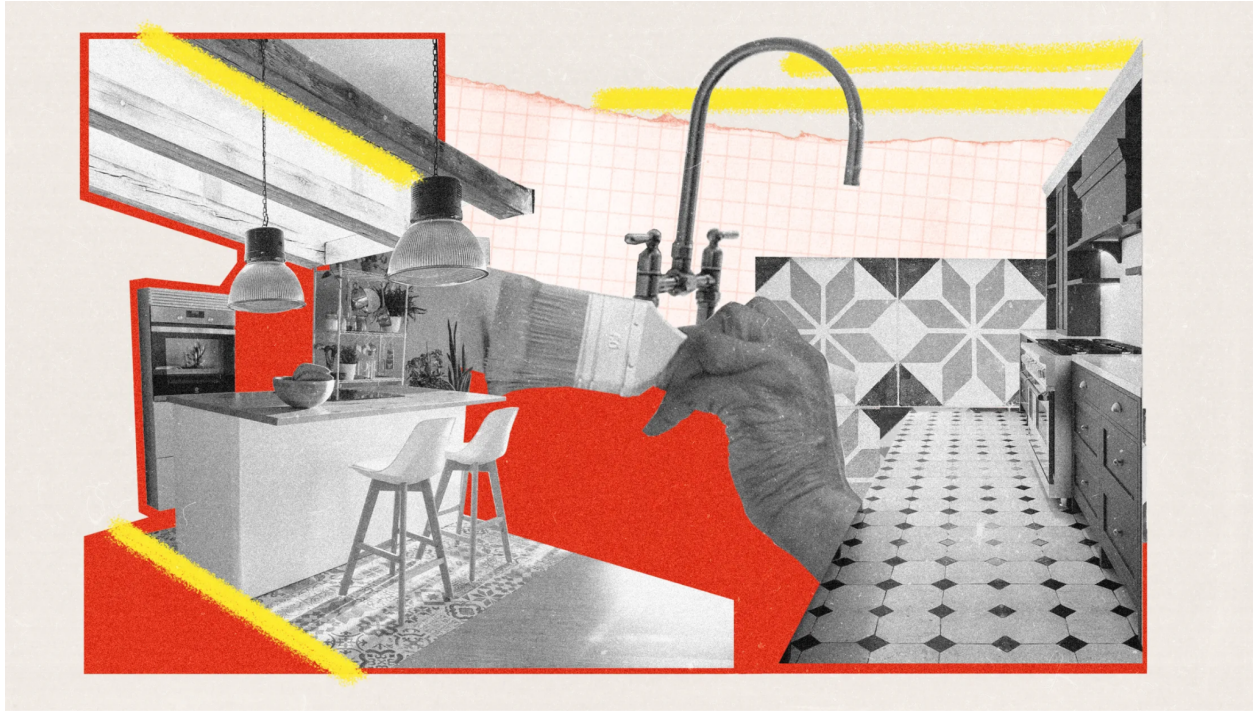


AD IT YOURSELF



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6 Ways to Make Your Dream Kitchen More Affordable

Designers share how you can create a showstopping kitchen without breaking the bank

A expansive island lined with leather stools, gleaming appliances, or a deep copper farmhouse sink are all the stuff of dream kitchen fantasies. But for many homeowners, luxuriating in such features simply isn't in the renovation budget. However, there's no need to spend day after day cooking and gathering in a space that does anything less than delight. By taking a few creative turns, embracing unexpected materials, and smartly sourcing products, you can design a showstopping kitchen without breaking the bank. Here, designers offer their tips on everything from cabinetry to counters to hardware that will help you make your ideal kitchen a reality.

Seek out off-the-shelf cabinets

When sourcing cabinetry for closed storage, peruse the vast off-the-shelf varieties at go-to retailers like [IKEA](#). Many prefab kitchen systems come in a variety of colors, materials, and finishes. Juliana Sorzano, project manager at New York firm [PJCArchitecture](#), frequently specifies these kinds of cabinets for clients with a wide range of budgets and design needs. When purchasing a stock system, Hattie Collins of [Hattie Sparks Interiors](#) in New Orleans recommends sticking with a classic look, like Shaker-style overlay cabinetry.

Spring for eye-catching hardware

Enliven cabinets with knobs and pulls rendered in gorgeous shapes and finishes. “Dress them up with hardware and then splurge on lighting,” says Illinois-based designer [Alexandra Kaehler](#). [Megan Evans](#), founder of her eponymous design studio in Louisiana, considers hardware jewelry for the kitchen. It can be mounted on any cabinet, “and it instantly elevates the space,” she points out. Her favorite kind? “I love the patina of unlacquered brass. It is so timeless and works in a contemporary or traditional home,” she adds. Based in Ridgewood, New Jersey, designer [Kerri Pilchik](#) also encourages “using a special piece just on a few cabinets, such as a cremone bolt or latch.”

Choose an unconventional countertop

Like cabinets, [countertops](#) make one of the strongest first impressions in a kitchen. “We select materials that maintain the style impact, but we lean toward cost-efficient options such as butcher block or porcelain slabs,” explains Sorzano. “These are good substitutes for marble.” Another solid bet, she adds, are recycled glass countertops because they “not only help save money but are a green solution.”

For Collins, quartz is “a fantastic, durable alternative” to marble, “but a real cost saver would be granite,” she shares. “I know granite has a bad rap from the brown and tan speckled options that plagued the late 1990s and early 2000s, but there are some beautiful ones out there if you do a little digging.”

Make a statement with backsplashes

A Florida kitchen that Pilchik recently revamped now features ceramic glazed tiles emblazoned with a camellia motif. “A patterned ceramic tile can add interest and bold color,” she says, “or a handmade [Zellige tile](#) can add beautiful, soft color and texture.” New York designer [Young Huh](#) also likes to give stone the limelight on these panels. “Choosing the right stone for a backsplash can add drama and make a huge difference,” she says, pointing out that while it can be expensive, “it doesn’t have to be. Allow yourself some time to visit stone yards and do some deep-dive shopping.”

Another practical, eco-friendly [backsplash idea](#) that Evans likes to take is utilizing the same material for the counter and backsplash for a seamless, sophisticated look. “Depending on the size of your kitchen, you may end up with remnants from the countertop slab that are unusable,” she elaborates, “so why not carry it up the wall underneath your cabinets?”

Consider non-hardwood floors

Floors crafted from solid oak and maple planks infuse kitchens with warmth, comfort, and a jolt of rusticity, but they’re a big investment. Evans points out that “there are some beautiful engineered hardwood flooring selections to work within any budget,” but “if you have floors that need refinishing, which can be costly, a great option would be a [painted floor](#) in a glossy finish.” Other alternatives? Resilient [cork](#) or vinyl tiles.

Start small

It might not be the right time to install a breakfast nook or fancy wine rack just yet, but there are modest hacks that can help get you closer to having your dream kitchen, like swapping out a lackluster faucet for a shimmering new stainless steel one. Kaehler personally enjoys finding [antique lighting](#) to buoy kitchen projects. “I love searching for something that feels really special,” she says, “like a pair of French lanterns or Murano pendants.”

As Nina Etnier, partner at the New York design practice [Float Studio](#), puts it, “A kitchen refresh is an easy way to start reimagining your home and to experiment with your design style. A simple change in [paint color](#) can go a long way in reinventing your space.”