

# Cooking Up A



## Kitchen Design

*What to Save, Where to Splurge*

by CINDY BRZOSTOWSKI



They say the kitchen is the heart of the home, so when it comes to designing such an important room in the house, it can be hard to reconcile your vision—your dream—with your real-life budget. Killy Scheer, the founder of Austin-based Scheer & Co. Interior Design, is quite familiar with these kinds of decisions.

Having honed her skills under tastemakers such as

Jonathan Adler and in commercial architecture firms, Scheer founded her luxury residential and boutique commercial design firm in 2013. In her work, she's dedicated to delivering client-driven, research-based design solutions, so we turned to her for expert advice on what to save and where to splurge with your kitchen design.

### More Bang for Your Buck

When it comes to decking out a kitchen, cabinets can be one of the biggest expenses on the budget. To save, Scheer suggests open shelving as one solution. “Open shelves will cut down on the cost of doors, drawers, hardware, materials and labor,” she explains. “You can purchase inexpensive boxes and splurge on custom or semi-custom doors and drawer fronts. Companies like Semihandmade work with Ikea cabinets, but local carpenters can also make anything you want.”

Speaking of hardware, that’s another great way to economize. “If you have a ton of cabinets, the cost adds up fast,” she says. “Even though it’s considered the jewelry of the home, there are so many great options at affordable prices.”

You can also save some bucks when choosing your backsplash, Scheer says. “A less expensive tile can go a long way if it has a classic look or is installed in an unexpected pattern.”

### Worth the Splurge

Deciding where to splurge on your kitchen design ultimately boils down to your priorities and budget. Scheer explains that busy families might be focused on storage solutions to keep things clutter-free, while avid gourmet cooks might go all-out for top-quality appliances they deem essential. Then there are homeowners who plan to resell within a few years, and for them, it could be worth getting cosmetic upgrades rather than a full-blown renovation.

Say you decide your countertop is where you want to spend more lavishly. Having a counter that not only looks good but functions well is crucial in any kitchen, but there are still ways to be smart about it, Scheer says. “If you fall in love with a unique stone for your counters but it’s a budget-buster, consider using it only on the island, and choose a less costly option for perimeter cabinets.”

Another piece of wisdom for anyone on the verge of a splurge: Test out your selection beforehand. Take the countertop example. Says Scheer: “Get a sample of the countertop you’re thinking of buying and spill wine and ketchup on it, cut lemons, and place a hot pan on it. Know what you’re getting into!”

### Sharing a Full Plate

If it’s your first time renovating your kitchen, it’s easy to feel overwhelmed by all the options out there and bogged down by all the logistics involved, especially if you’re going at it alone. Scheer recommends that newbies hire a professional team—a designer, architect and contractor—who can make everything a whole lot easier. If it doesn’t work financially to hire all three, she says a great contractor is still needed.

“I strongly recommend against trying to be your own general contractor unless that’s what you do for a living,” she explains. “Scheduling and rescheduling trades and subs, purchasing materials and coordinating deliveries is >>





not for the faint of heart and truly is best when it's orchestrated by professionals."

When working with a contractor, Scheer suggests making all of your final selections early. "That way, your contractor can price out exactly what you've chosen and provide you with a hard bid, meaning that almost all expenses are accounted for upfront."

### **The Do's and Don'ts of DIY**

Still determined to do it all yourself? Scheer stresses how important it is to have a plan. "Either hire a drafter or get some sort of layout on paper. If you can have elevations [architectural drawings] done, even better, but a cabinet company can help with those thorough shop drawings," she says. "Leaving choices up to assumptions may result in some unwanted and potentially expensive surprises, so having a clear plan to follow will cut down on confusion and last-minute decision-making."

Even having a plan may not save you from facing the inevitable curveball that will likely be tossed your way during construction, says Scheer. "Remodeling is complicated because it's impossible to know what might be inside walls until they're opened up. So, be prepared to roll with the punches, and problem-solve on the fly."

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