

# Key ingredients for kitchen reno

*Pay attention to cabinet style and materials, as well as cost*

BY IRENE TURNBULL

If new kitchen cabinetry is high on your renovation wish list, you may have already discovered that it's not the lack of options that makes decision-making a challenge, but rather the wide price variance that exists in today's cabinet marketplace, especially when aesthetically they often look so similar.

Price is certainly important when you consider that the cost of new cabinets, and counter tops can easily be 50-percent or more of your total kitchen remodel budget. Price, however, is a poor value gauge in the cabinet industry, where jargon is often confusing when trying to evaluate the pros and cons of something as important as new kitchen cabinets. Knowing how to navigate the cabinetry playing field could make a huge difference in the lasting success of your new kitchen project. So let's get started.

Essentially there are three ways to purchase your kitchen:

**Stock cabinets** are mass-produced and sold at retail as either cash and carry pre-assembled or as knock-down items (for flat-pack shipping) requiring post-sale assembly.

**Custom cabinets** are built specifically according to approved design plans and personal choices made for style, materials choice, functional enhancements, aesthetics, professional design, and installation.

**Semi-custom cabinets** are also stock cabinets that fit within a structured factory design format but with limited options that offer a choice of door styles and finishing.

**Pros and cons:** Stock cabinets will cost less but you're on your own for measuring, design layout, assembly and installation, which will cost extra for non-DIY buyers. With stock cabinets, you're making your space fit the cabinets, not making the cabinets fit the space. Contrary to claims that "all you need is your power screw driver," cabinetry design and install is a skill.

**Kitchen cabinets** are defined by the construction method used to fabricate them — essentially there are two main types in our marketplace — framed and frameless. While both start with a basic box, the more traditional framed cabinet has an attached front frame with a vertical centre piece where the doors meet. The cabinet doors are hinged to the face frame and can be inset to allow the frame to be fully exposed or attached to allow either part or all of the frame to be covered offering many (traditional) design options. Frameless cabinets have no face frame and doors are attached with concealed hinges to the inside of the cabinet box and cover the entire front side of the cabinet which results in a simpler, sleeker overall look.



**This beautiful kitchen meets the budget by incorporating the talents of custom design and installation professionals together with selective options from a quality manufacturer to ensure lasting performance.**

**Pros and cons:** Frameless or Euro style kitchen cabinet construction is the most popular and therefore the most market and cost-competitive with options in every price category. It offers great design flexibility and maximum cabinet storage space. However for a more traditional period look (offset doors), custom framed construction might be your answer.

**Door and drawer styles** are the two design elements that most impact a kitchen's visual appeal, but there's much more than looks to consider.

Essentially, doors and drawer fronts are either framed or slab. A framed door contains a centre panel, of wood, glass, beadboard or some other material, attached to a frame, offering a wide style selection. A slab door is one piece and can be completely flat or, thanks to modern materials (MDF) and advanced CNC cutting technology, it can be machined to create a variety of style options from traditional to contemporary. The most common door styles are raised panel, flat (or recessed) panel, and flat slab (or plank). Their method of construction depends upon the choice of construction materials.

**Pros and cons:** The price of doors will depend on style and material, starting with one piece MDF either painted or wrapped with thermofoil and moving upward from there to wood, which, depending on the design, is at the top of the scale. Choice of finishing also affects price.