

NYC KITCHEN RENOVATION GUIDE



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EDITION**

S W E E T E N



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ULTIMATE GUIDE TO RENOVATING YOUR KITCHEN

Renovating can be a lot of work - Sweeten makes it easier to nail down scope and find the best design and construction experts for your project. Read on for nitty gritty budget basics and real-life kitchen inspiration!

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\$20,000 is a good starting point for a basic kitchen renovation in NYC – here's how that plays out across materials and labor.

You have a fair amount of choice in deciding what to spend on some material aspects of a kitchen renovation, but there are other costs that are less-obvious, labor-intensive, and tremendously critical to the work overall, no matter how high or low you go on materials.

STRAIGHT FORWARD COSTS

Take a quick walk around your kitchen or any home appliance store and you can start to get a feel for the obvious costs of a kitchen renovation.



APPLIANCES BACKSPLASH COUNTER TOPS

You can expect to spend **under \$400** or **up to \$3,000** (and well beyond) on each of your stove, fridge, and dishwasher selections. You can find basic sink options for **under \$100** and **up to \$2,500**, and faucet fixtures for **under \$40** and **up to \$1,200**.

You can keep costs **under \$3 per square foot** for efficient and easy-to-clean subway or penny backsplash tile options, or go **up to \$35** (and beyond) for a higher-end tile, stone, or marble finish.

Similarly, you can limit countertop costs per square foot to **under \$10** for laminate counters, **between \$50 and \$125** for some tile, wood, and recycled glass options, and **between \$100 to \$300** (and beyond) for acrylic, stone, granite, and marble countertop options.

HARDWARE & LIGHTING

You will also need to choose hardware like cabinet pulls that can run as low as a few dollars a piece and lighting fixtures that can be had for **\$25** (for basic flush mounts) or run up to hundreds or thousands of dollars for decorative chandeliers or multiple statement pendants and under-cabinet lighting.

CABINET FINISHES

Cabinet materials also vary widely in quality and cost. You can spend **between \$600 and \$2,000 per linear foot** for cabinetry. MDF is the least expensive option, followed by veneer cabinets and wood veneer cabinets.

Cabinet interiors made of melamine can help keep costs down, while plywood cabinet interiors are the standard for more durable, solid cabinets. Cabinetry finishes also add to the cost; expect to pay around **\$6 per square foot** for cabinets that are brush-painted, or **\$15 per square foot** for cabinets that are spray-painted.

These choices are up to you, your budget, your aesthetic and functional preferences, and your desire for re-sale value in your home.



BEHIND-THE-SCENES COSTS

In contrast to the obvious and predictable costs, there are some mostly unavoidable behind-the-scenes investments to consider.

DESIGN

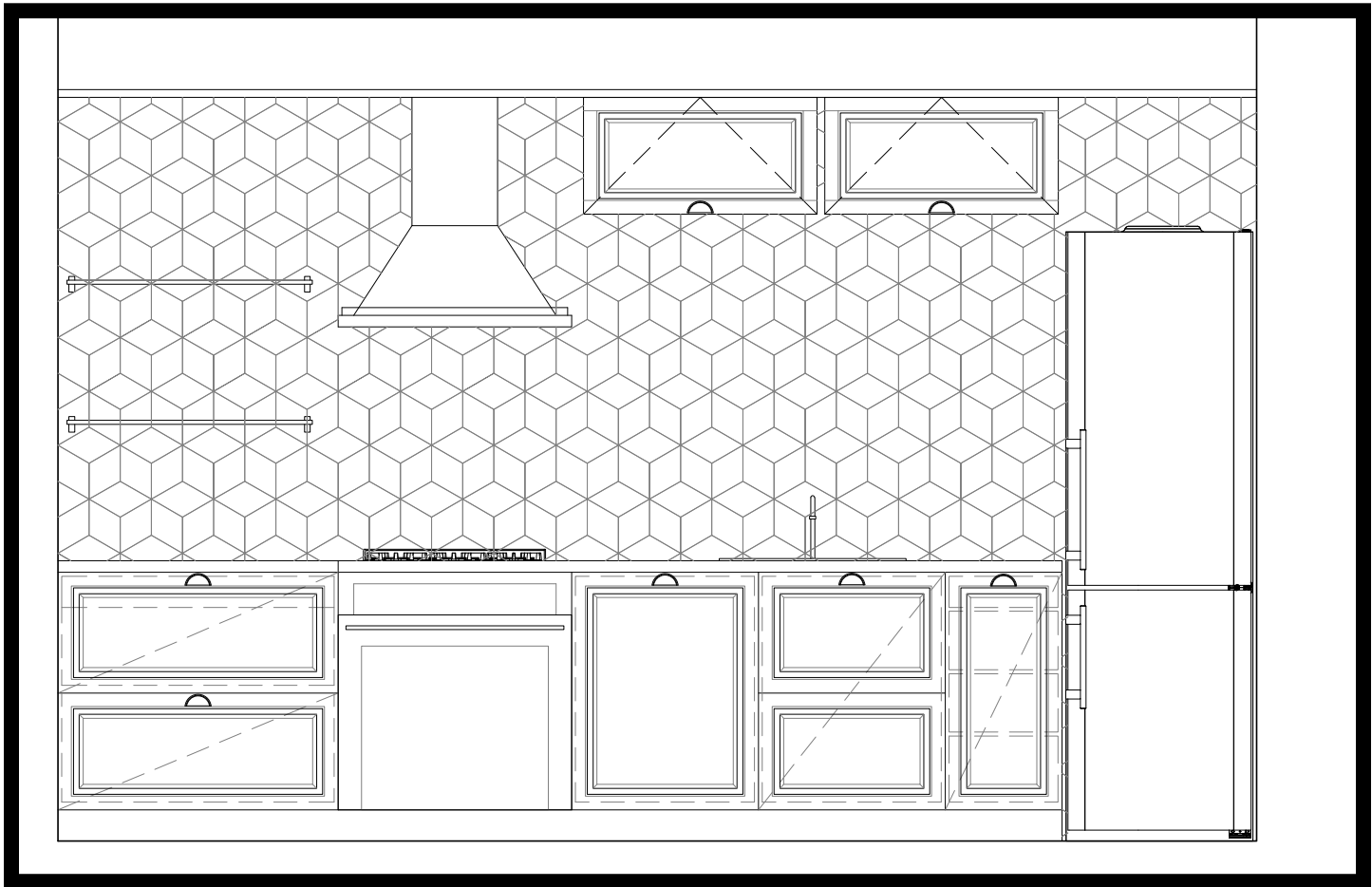
In the design stage, plan to work together with the experts you hire to create detailed drawings that account for all physical elements of the kitchen.

Your drawings should cover layout, plumbing, cabinetry and counter specs, lighting, and appliances. You should also select your backsplash, flooring, sink, and hardware during the design phase.

The requirements of individual buildings can play a significant role in dictating design and budget needs.

Building demands can range from insurance coverage minimums, which limit your ability to work with professionals who aren't carrying high-value insurance policies, to alteration agreements that require anyone doing any work in the

building to have far-reaching coverage for problems they may never encounter, like asbestos removal or explosion and collapse scenarios. You may find that contractors who can afford to work in buildings with more extensive requirements tend to have higher operating costs that meet higher insurance requirements.



SITE PREP

In the site prep stage, significant behind-the-scenes labor is needed to ensure that your kitchen renovation maintains its value over time. Almost without exception, and especially in old buildings, your contractor will need to strip the walls and flooring to frame and level, respectively, before you attempt cabinet, tile, and counter installation.

This step is critical and labor intensive – the cost for this step can easily average **\$4,000**. If your home is new or the sub-floor is concrete, leveling needs may be minimal, but otherwise, you probably need to account for floor leveling and new wall sheetrock or intensive

plastering before any surface work can get going.

Exposing the existing conditions inside walls during this leveling and framing step will also allow your contractor to address plumbing or electrical issues before you hook up a brand new appliance. You may find that you need to replace all horizontal plumbing work to the building’s “stack” (the main vertical lines that run throughout the building), and run new wiring to head off plumbing and electrical problems that you may have inherited.

While these steps are labor- and cost-intensive, this work

is critical for foundation alignment and infrastructure needed for the project.

Plumbing services alone can cost **\$2,000 to \$3,500** (or higher) and plumbing permits (required by the City’s Department of Buildings for any plumbing work that exceeds a minor repair or a direct swap of a similar fixture) can run to **\$2,000** per permit. If you’re removing an outlet or doing electrical work, you may need an electrical permit, which can run close to **\$900**. You may also need an asbestos inspection, again depending on the building’s requirements and your plumbing plans, which can cost around **\$500**.



INSTALLATION

The installation stage is the third and final stage.

While appliances are often installed by the store where you made the purchase (sometimes as a built-in cost and sometimes as an added delivery/installation fee), the craftsmanship involved in the installation of the cabinetry, counters, tile, and flooring varies in accordance with the size of your kitchen and the degree of customization you need to make all of the pieces fit.

HIGH-END OPTIONS

You can go sky-high on luxury appliances but the real value of a high-end kitchen comes in the softer costs of precise design and infrastructure upgrades and the investment of custom millwork and craftsmanship.

\$40,000 The move toward a high-end kitchen begins when you are looking to re-work or expand the layout of the existing kitchen.

CHANGING THE LAYOUT

Dropping walls, moving gas lines, re-routing plumbing lines, and re-wiring electrical options automatically hit a cost threshold above the **\$20,000** you need for a basic kitchen gut. If you are considering that kind

of transformative work, you'll need architectural designs from a registered architect and you'll need to plan for the cost of permits, thorough building approvals, high insurance coverage requirements, and more

involved management from a general contractor overseeing the project. These “soft costs” – expenses critical to the success of the work but often invisible and unforeseen – can represent **15 - 35% of the renovation cost.**

CUSTOM MILLWORK

Cabinets are generally the most cost- and labor-intensive physical aspect of a luxe kitchen renovation.

Homeowners looking for high-end finishes tend to go in one of two directions: they opt for minimalist sleek cabinetry with concealed hardware, or they turn to decorative cabinetry with highly custom visual details. Either way, the starting point for basic custom

cabinetry is **\$1,000 per linear foot.**

Custom cabinet options that can raise the profile of a kitchen include wood veneers that provide a tailored look and incorporate unique materials, high gloss lacquer that offers a dramatic visual effect and is expensive because the application requires multiple layers and specialized handling, and

solid-color (or “color core”) laminate cabinets that are color-finished all the way through so you don't have any visible separation between interiors and surfaces.

Homeowners looking to maximize every inch of the kitchen can work with a variety of cabinet options that dramatically raise the functionality of the kitchen, at a cost. Drawers are hugely



popular because they allow for more immediate access to storage than traditional cupboards. Because drawers require more specialized labor to create “boxes within boxes” and to install mechanics and hardware that line up and glide perfectly, kitchen drawers can be five times as expensive as conventional cupboards. Creative storage solutions like a lazy susan

feature, pull-out cabinets and organizers, and self-closing drawer and door hardware involve hardware and labor that can add a few hundred dollars or several thousand dollars to your budget, depending on the durability and customization needed. Custom cabinets are not just for homes with lots of square footage; NYC homeowners with limited kitchen depth

may also find themselves deciding to go custom on cabinetry. Cabinets with less depth accommodate tighter spaces and more depth accommodate specific tableware storage. These choices inherently require custom cabinet work because pre-fabricated cabinet options come in limited and fixed depth measurements.

DETAILS, DETAILS

Beyond the design, layout, appliances, and cabinetry, a luxe kitchen renovation is likely to incorporate careful details that add to the visual appeal of the space or conceal elements that you might rather keep hidden. You might opt to continue custom cabinetry work with

panels to conceal appliances. The “wow” factor is big here but so is the cost: conceal panels need to be made by the millworker and installed after the appliances go in, so you may be paying for multiple sets of hands to work with and around these features. You might also opt

for hidden cabinet push and pull hardware that eliminates any external hardware.

Cabinets with seamless surfaces are super striking and simple to clean, but require expert construction to function without visible pulls.

SHOULD YOU GO WITH CUSTOM OR PRE-FABRICATED CABINETS?

Cabinet construction may well end up being the single biggest expense of your entire renovation, and the results are the most obvious visual proof of your investment, so this can feel like a heavy decision. The challenge (and opportunity) is that your choices are endless, but if you focus on a few key factors, you can find the right cabinets for your new kitchen.

While it's tempting to assume that your budget is the only consideration and while it's true that custom cabinets can be (much, much) more expensive than stock cabinets, they don't have to be. Even the cheapest kitchen is an enormous investment, so if budget isn't necessarily the deciding factor, how should you decide and how can you keep your budget from dictating your choices? First, a few definitions:

STOCK CABINETS

IKEA is widely considered the go-to for stock cabinets. Unlike almost anyone else, they mass-produce a system of set sizes, colors, finishes, and features that you pick

and choose. The pieces of your order are pulled from stock supplies and shipped to your home, where you need to handle both the assembly and installation. IKEA keeps

its costs low because they are sending your order to you in pieces and because the materials they use are very inexpensive.

PRE-FABRICATED CABINETS

Home Depot, Lowe's, and other big-box national retailers are distributors of independent lines of cabinets. They offer a semi-custom option: like IKEA, you pick and choose from set sizes, colors, finishes, and features

(though national retailers tend to have more options overall). Unlike IKEA, your order is then manufactured and assembled for you so that your cabinets arrive ready for installation. Because you have more choice in materials

and construction, the range of prices varies more here. You will probably pay more upfront for higher-quality materials, but you may spend less on labor because the cabinets are assembled before they get to you for installation.



CUSTOM CABINETS

Custom cabinets are designed and constructed by hand based on your individual design. You define the sizes, materials, finishes, and features and your order is hand-crafted and delivered for installation. Because your choices for materials and construction are endless, the range of material and labor costs is very wide. The costs here are generally distributed between your choice of material and style, labor, and a more personalized design and customer service approach.

HIGH-END BUILT-TO-ORDER

A small group of cabinet companies also offer cabinetry systems that are extremely high-end (Bulthaup and Henrybuilt are examples). These companies are known for beautiful and durable cabinet construction and best-in-industry warranties, but the bare minimum for even a small kitchen can easily exceed **\$20,000**, so unlike other categories of cabinet construction, this option is only available if the starting point for your budget allows you to consider it.

Custom cabinets might be less expensive than you think if your kitchen has limited space, lots of space, or an unusual layout.

In a tight kitchen, stock and pre-fabricated cabinets in standard sizes might not be worth the initial material savings because you will need more inventive labor to fit everything in. In a large kitchen, extra depth

or high ceilings give you an opportunity for additional storage and functionality. Non-standard cabinet heights and depths can bring value to your renovation and re-sale value. Multiple corners, awkward niches, and unusual

footprints can be tough to outfit. Stock and pre-fab cabinets in standard sizes may force you to spend money on filler materials, wasted space, and labor for semi-custom adjustments.

Cost aside, pre-fabricated cabinets might work best for you if your renovation timeline is speedy or you feel overwhelmed by choice.

Custom cabinets have lengthier lead times. If you're gearing up for a renovation in the next two months, you can get your hands on pre-fab cabinets in-store on a same-day basis, or delivered within two or three weeks. And, a

perceived weakness of pre-fabricated cabinets is actually a real strength: for many homeowners, unlimited choice is not necessarily desirable. Many homeowners go with custom cabinets because they think they want options

and then end up feeling overwhelmed and paralyzed. Pre-fabricated cabinets offer a pick-and-choose experience that requires less homework and decision fatigue.



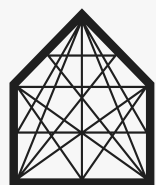
Custom cabinets might be worth extra money if you plan to stay for years, have a high-traffic kitchen, or want personalized support.

<p>Semi-custom and custom cabinets offer higher quality materials in sturdier thicknesses that last longer.</p> <p>Particle board and MDF, two common materials for stock cabinets, are susceptible to water and have a shorter life span than plywood and wood. 1/2" particle board will not last as long as 3/4" or 1" furniture-grade plywood cabinet bases, and solid wood doors and drawers will endure tougher handling</p>	<p>over the years. Custom cabinets also typically use sturdier construction and joinery methods. Custom cabinetmakers will often use dovetail joints that interlock pieces of wood to distribute weight and stress more evenly, whereas stock nut, bolt, and nail methods isolate wear on a few points.</p> <p>Custom cabinets also offer options for tougher hardware elements like hinges and drawer sliders. In addition,</p>	<p>custom cabinetmakers generally provide a higher level of design support and customer assistance. They will do site visits, re-designs, and get a real person on the phone with you when you need it.</p> <p>You might be absolutely fine to handle the ordering and delivery of a stock system, but if you hit a roadblock, custom cabinet companies expect to support you and respond personally.</p>
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Still having trouble? Go for a hybrid!

Combining a pre-fab kitchen with custom pieces can lower your cost without compromising on quality.

Sweeten handpicks contractors to match each project's location, budget, scope, and style.
[Follow the blog](#) for renovation ideas and inspiration and when you're ready to renovate, [start your project on Sweeten](#).



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