



"Some of the first words I hear from my clients are, 'I want to be part of the conversation when I'm preparing a meal.'"



Kitchen design for all time

by Jackie Norris

Pink countertops and flower-power wallpaper screamed it was the 1960s in Diane Johnson's kitchen. In reality, it was 30-something years later, and the Maplewood resident knew she had to stop living in the past. Johnson painted the cabinets white, purchased white hardware and "cheap" hanging lights, and installed formica countertops. "What was I thinking?" she asks. "This was a basic Band-Aid and do-it-yourself fixer upper. It was ugly."

Sam Oertel, owner of Artistic Kitchen Creations in St. Louis Park, says when you're remodeling, following certain trends can date a kitchen. But adhering to lasting styles, she says, will keep your kitchen fresh for years to come. A timeless look also will prevent you from more expensive updates in the future. "I always encourage my clients to stick with a design that will look great 20 years from now," Oertel says.

To achieve a lasting design, pay attention to your home's style and architecture. "If you live in a 1920s





farmhouse, it's just not going to look right if you go with a contemporary kitchen," Oertel says. "You don't know what the future will hold, and if the trend fades away, it will ruin your home." She recommends cherry cabinets with dark stains or cream-toned painted cabinets, hardwood floors and stone countertops made of either granite or quartz. She says these items are less likely to go out of style and will appeal to the masses if you decide to sell.

Staying true to an older home's design doesn't mean sacrificing space and functionality. "Many older homes don't have very large or open kitchens," says Steve George, general manager of Castle Building & Remodeling in Minneapolis and St. Paul. "Some of the first words I hear from my clients are, 'I want to be part of the conversation when I'm preparing a meal.' Kitchens have become the gathering space for families, and they want to open them up."

Lack of space was an issue Minneapolis member Kathy Anderson tackled when she hired Castle

Building & Remodeling to renovate her kitchen last year. She says she loves the house but wanted an updated space with a more cook-friendly layout. "My home was built in 1922," Anderson says. "There was limited counter space and storage, no dishwasher, one outlet and a refrigerator in the old icebox opening."

Before Anderson started the remodeling process, she went to as many open houses in the neighborhood as she could. "I wanted to know how others have worked with older kitchens," she says.

After two months, Anderson's kitchen was everything she could have ever hoped for. Complete with new lighting, cherry cabinets, slate floors, quartz countertops and a custom tiled backsplash, her kitchen is a perfect example of timeless design. Anderson also managed to stay within her budget of \$62,300. "Castle was able to work with me and what I was comfortable spending, and I still got the great results that met my needs," she says.

Photo courtesy of Castle Building & Remodeling. Kathy Anderson's newly remodeled kitchen contains all the elements of timeless design.



Photos courtesy of Diane Johnson. Johnson's bland and outdated kitchen (right) was given a much-needed makeover (above) by West End Kitchen Center in St. Paul.



"The kitchen and bath tend to be the areas most home buyers look at first."

While a kitchen remodel is time consuming and costly — averaging \$30,000 to \$65,000 according to experts we interviewed — the payback is well worth it. *Remodeling* magazine's Cost vs. Value report for 2008 and 2009 says Minneapolis residents can expect to see as much as a 73 percent return on their money. "It's a good long-term investment to make," George says. "The kitchen and bath tend to be the areas most home buyers look at first."

The price tag for a kitchen can add up quickly, but with wise decision making, the products you choose could save you money in the long run. For example, Oertel says you should never opt for cheaper cabinetry. "You'll regret it," she says. "The products won't last as long, and they'll need to be replaced sooner. If it costs a little bit more to do it the right way, then do it. It's the difference between liking and loving your kitchen."





"I waited years before I was able to remodel my outdated kitchen. But, it was well worth it."

Design experts say no matter what your style, your kitchen can reflect your personality and have staying power. To make a big impact, integrate a unique tiled backsplash or a customized furniture piece used as an island. However, Oertel warns to avoid touches like lockers for kids' sports equipment or pull-out drawers for pet water bowls. "You have

Personalizing your space can be as simple as choosing a more vibrant paint color. The shade or hue can reflect your taste and doesn't detract from the value of your kitchen.



Photos courtesy of Castle Building & Remodeling According to experts, stainless steel appliances, dark-stained cabinets and quartz countertops are trends that will last.

to keep in mind kids grow up and pets pass away," she says. "If you decide to sell your home, a prospective buyer might not have children or pets, and those features won't appeal to them."

An added bonus to timeless design is not having to give up the amenities. Stainless steel appliances are an enduring trend as well as appliances covered by wooden panels, which create a seamless look. George says he's receiving more requests for modern appliances with wooden panels. "There's a simple elegance about them and the appliances blend into the cabinetry," George says. "You wouldn't have seen a dishwasher in a 1920s kitchen, so the wood panels allow the home to retain the same feel it would have had nearly 100 years ago."

Johnson went from having a kitchen fit for a hippie to a DIY disaster in the '90s. But thanks to a remodel from West End Kitchen Center in St. Paul last year, she now has a show-stopper with cutting-edge modern style making her the envy of friends. "The cabinets are solid cherry, my countertop is made of quartz, and I have a killer tiled backsplash," she says. Other features that reflect the homeowner's wants but don't compromise the lasting appeal of the design are the heated floor, the black glass appliances, and efficient and warm lighting. "I waited years before I was able to remodel my outdated kitchen," Johnson says. "But, it was well worth it." ☺

For the most up-to-date ratings, call us or check angieslist.com

