

Expert tips to save big on your kitchen renovation

By Chris Palmer

Much to my wife's chagrin, jobs around my house are often last on my list. However I have resolved to transform my boring builder's kitchen into a thing of beauty and improved, family-friendly functionality. I am going for a complete overhaul, but will be saving thousands of dollars on labour with things that I – and most readers – can probably do themselves.

Here are my DIY tips for projects big and small.

Visualize the look and functionality

Before you go knocking down walls, take time to envision how your kitchen will not only look, but work best. Countertop space, traffic flow and what the kitchen will be used for other than cooking, are all important questions. For example, my son is a toddler but eventually the kitchen could be a good place for him to do his homework. For me, I want the kitchen table to act as an alternative office space for invoicing and project planning, that's why I've added a small desk nook on my pantry wall.

Know your limits

You can save thousands on hours associated with labour by handling manual labour tasks and finishing touches yourself. Before you go smashing down a loadbear-



Chris Palmer

ing wall or bursting a hidden pipe, call in the licensed trades to make sure you're clear to proceed. Trade professionals have provided me with a lot of valued guidance. Their expertise has allowed me to use my time more efficiently because I won't end up wasting time on jobs out of my skill set.

Tricks of the trade

Interior designers and renovators have a few crafty tricks to making kitchens look like something out of a glossy home décor magazine. Finishing touches can make a kitchen look expensive, but are easy to do. Hardware is like adding jewelry. While it's readily available at many big box stores, specialty retailers like Lee Valley carry a comprehensive selection so you don't have to settle for anything other than what your Pinterest-worthy vision originally entailed. Other simple upgrades I recommend anyone to do in a renovation are to go for a bigger baseboard and fatter crown molding. Personally, I won't waste time with 4-inch trim. For a professional look, I will be installing a 5.5-inch baseboard throughout my

kitchen. One other tip I like to recommend to giving that look of a pro, use a semi-gloss paint on your baseboards and crown, this added sheen makes the molding look that much richer.

Don't underestimate undermount lighting

It's very rare that you can walk into a home and find good lighting. It typically needs improvement and requires a plan. One of the simplest things you can do to increase the functionality and improve the look of your kitchen is undermount lighting. It makes a kitchen look as if you spent thousands on a professional. The good news is that you can buy do-it-yourself customizable LED lighting from retailers like Lee Valley – and you don't need to hire an electrician to install them.

Save vs. spend

Every minute I put into my kitchen myself adds up to money in my wallet. Most trades charge anywhere from \$75 to \$125 an hour. But there are a few things that I will be investing in. A double farmhouse style sink is one of them because it plays a major role in increasing work efficiency in the kitchen as you can wash, chop and clean in an organized manner. Quality appliances are another area I will invest in, because it means less costs in repairs in the long run.



Create a beautiful kitchen

However, you can save by purchasing the fridge, stove and dishwasher all together as most retailers offer a extra discount if you buy multiple appliances at once.

As founder and owner of Hand Crafted by Chris Palmer, Chris produces beautiful, one-of-a-kind pieces for a wide range of commercial and residential clients. He also appeared on HGTV's Canada's Handyman Challenge and regularly shares his expertise with audiences across Canada through speaking engagements and media. For more information, visit www.handcraftedbychrispalmer.com.

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