

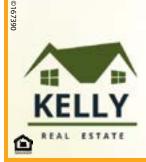


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# Top kitchen trends

Designing a new home, remodeling your own or simply rethinking aesthetics and decor all require a little imagination and a lot of inspiration. A quick online search brings up hundreds if not thousands of thoughtful ways to make your kitchen match your desired style from modern to traditional or anything in between.

All those results can be slightly overwhelming, however. Rather than having a go at it alone, rely on the professionals to guide you toward looks that are all the rage and fit a variety of budgets. Consider these on-trend design ideas from the kitchen experts at Wellborn Cabinet:

Let it Flow: Open concepts have become quite common as it allows the kitchen to feel like one large room where loved ones and guests can intermingle as opposed to an enclosed space. This flowing openness lends continuous visibility to the area ranging from the (seemingly) always active kitchen to gathering spaces in the dining and living rooms. An open floor plan also helps connect design aesthetics from each room to the next.

**Opt for Concealed Storage:** Pots, pans, knives and all your favorite kitchen gadgets need hidden somewhere. With options ranging from pullout peg boards to sleek tray dividers, these clever contraptions can help you stay organized while making functionality beautiful.



**Incorporate Smart Tech:** Trends aren't exclusively about aesthetics practicality via technology is equally important for those looking to update their kitchens to the 21st century. Devices like smart refrigerators that allow you to take inventory from an app, smart lighting that brightens and dims to save on electricity and voice assistants that help you keep track of recipes are all trendy paths toward a top-of-the-line kitchen.

**Bring in Organic Touches:** Organic modern is in, which means adding organic touches using natural materials like stone and wood in your cabinets, countertops, flooring and more. Achieve a warm vibe with these organic elements paired with a neutral color palette and natural light.

## 4 alternative uses for kitchen cabinets

If you love the look of beautiful kitchen cabinets and appreciate their functionality, try incorporating them throughout the house with these ideas.

\* Home Office - As working from home continues to rise in popularity, you might need that extra storage space around or above your desk whether it's in a full-blown office or a nook in the den.

\* Laundry Room - Uppers and lowers alike can help you stow away detergents, cleaning products, laundry baskets and even last season's wardrobe.

\* Mud Room - All those shoes and jackets need space somewhere, and kitchen cabinets in the mudroom can help you contain the mess.

\* Garage - Whether your garage serves as a secondary entertainment area, home gym or simply storage for outdoor tools and toys, cabinets allow you to organize (and hide) that equipment.

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# 5 ways to trim home energy bills

A fter the mortgage, utility costs, including electricity, likely make up one of the most significant portions of monthly budgets for the typical American household. In fact, according to data from the U.S. Energy Information Administration, the average residential electric bill in the United States is \$143.

However, reducing your family's energy costs is possible by following some smart, practical, cost-cutting tips from the heating and cooling experts at Mitsubishi Electric. Consider these ways to help dial down your energy bills.

## Service HVAC systems regularly

To ensure the best performance and efficiency possible, find a licensed contractor to keep your heating and cooling system well-maintained and serviced throughout the year. There are some tasks many homeowners can handle on their own, like keeping outdoor units free of debris and changing air filters. Some filters are removable and washable, saving you money. However, bringing in a professional 1-2 times a year for maintenance and to ensure proper function of ductwork and electrical components is also essential.

## **Appliances during non-peak hours**

Rather than using stoves, ovens and clothing dryers in the afternoon hours, consider doing so early in the morning or late in the evening. Peak time for many electricity providers is noon to 6 p.m., meaning using these appliances outside of this timeframe when conventional heating and cooling systems are likely running full throttle can help lower energy costs.

## Upgrade your system

The Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) incentivizes homeowners that opt for energy-efficient air-conditioning and heating options to replace fossil-fuel-fired furnaces. This includes upgrading your existing HVAC system to a qualified heat pump. Electric heat pumps provide more energy-efficient cooling and heating that equals cost and energy

savings as well as a reduced carbon footprint for homeowners. Installing a smart electrical panel alongside an all-electric heat pump enables homeowners to monitor and control energy consumption on-site or remotely using a smartphone for better overall efficiency and utility cost savings.

#### Harness the sun's energy

According to the Office of Energy Efficiency & Renewable Energy, the amount of sunlight that strikes the Earth's surface in 90 minutes could power the world's total energy usage for a full year. Investing in solar panels can help decrease energy bills and increase your home's sustainability. Additionally, some utility providers and government entities, including the IRA, offer incentives to help reduce installation costs.

## Don't heat or cool unused spaces

One mistake many homeowners make is forgetting to adjust their temperature settings when leaving the house. Whether you're



headed out for the weekend or just headed to work for the day, running your system in an empty house can result in unnecessarily high utility bills.

Multi-zone, all-electric heat pumps allow homeowners to set the comfort level and adjust the temperature in each room, reducing the energy waste of cooling unoccupied rooms. With a smartphone app, you can even adjust the settings remotely.



## **AMPLIFY AUTUMN CURB APPEAL** Home revovation projects to tackle this fall

Which lower temperatures and milder conditions, fall provides a perfect opportunity to tackle that home renovation to-do list. Whether you plan on making minor improvements or wholesale changes are on the horizon, taking on a few DIY projects can help you boost your home's curb appeal (and its value) while also prepping for colder weather in the days ahead.

Making investments now — like putting time and money toward longterm energy efficiency — can pay off down the road, whether you're planning for a potential sale or simply looking to get more enjoyment out of your home.

## **TOUCH UP EXTERIOR PAINT**

A fresh coat of paint not only goes a long way to making your house look new, but also will help keep moisture from getting into your wals, seeping into your wood deck or damaging porch railings. Keep in mind most exterior paints need to be applied when the temperature is still above 50 degrees.

## ADD OR REPLACE SHUTTERS

As a classic exterior design element, shutters can add instant charm to your home. With a variety of materials and colors to choose from, you can add shutters that suit your style and budget to give your home a more polished look. If it's already adorned with shutters, consider updating them with newer styles for a fresh appearance.

## **UPGRADE WITH STONE VENEER**

Natural and textured home trends continue to rise, leading many building pros and homeowners to gravitate toward stone veneer, or manufactured stone, as it can replicate the look of real stone. The wide range of exterior and interior applications means you can add comfort, character and beauty while complementing your existing style. There's no need to paint, coat or seal once installed for a low-maintenance solution for accent walls, fireplaces, siding, entryways and walkways.



## **CLEAN OUT GUTTERS**

Get a ladder, some gloves and clean out the leaves, acorns and twigs out of your gutters. You'll want to keep them clean so that rain water doesn't spill out and down the side of your house which can lead to foundation issues.

## **REFRESH PORCH COLUMNS**

Routine cleaning is one way to maintain porch columns, but if they're rotting or splitting, consider PVC porch column wraps for a visual transformation. Easy and often affordable, they're durable and decorative to fit existing columns or poles and can be painted to match your exterior color palette. They're resistant to pests, moisture and weather damage for long-lasting and nearly maintenance-free upgrades.

## **INVEST IN INSULATED SIDING**

Good insulation is key to keeping your home warm, cozy and weatherproof during colder months. While there are many ways to upgrade the insulation of your house, some homeowners are turning to insulated siding for a long-term solution. A cost-efficient way to beat the cold, It's low maintenance, built to last and withstands temperature fluctuations and hurricane force winds for a highly functional option to keep cold out for years to come.

## **CAULK AROUND WINDOWS**

Caulking windows is one of the most cost-effective ways to reduce your heating bills. Inspect all of your exterior window seals and caulk any seals that are broken to keep water from getting between the window and the wall.

## **UPDATE THE DRIVEWAY**

Whether you're looking to make some simple updates or it's time for a complete renovation, showing your driveway some love can significantly improve your home's curb appeal.

Adding an address post with a hanging basket or planting trees, shrubbery or flowers along the sides lends immediate aesthetic improvement.

For added low-light visibility and visual appeal, install lights along the perimeter to help the greenery stand out in the evening. If you're ready for a major overhaul, consider upgrading the driveway using cobblestone, pavers or stamped concrete.



# Coral clutter with a mudroom

Often positioned near the primary point of entry, mudrooms are a popular addition to many family homes. These organizational dynamos are the perfect place to catch muddy boots, backpacks, sports equipment and dirty paws before they make it all the way into the main living areas.

Regardless of whether your mudroom is an actual room or just a small space near the front door to hang bags and jackets, the organizational basics are the same:

*Corral Clutter:* One of the most important items in any mudroom is storage for shoes, pet supplies, backpacks, sporting equipment and other items. If built-in storage isn't in your budget, put up a sturdy shelving unit with a bin or basket for each family member.

*Get Hooked:* Securely anchor a row of strong hooks along the wall for coats, hats, scarves or other seasonal accessories that may otherwise find themselves dropped on the floor upon arriving home.

*Mud Happens:* Mudrooms are meant to handle dirt so nix the carpet and lay down tile or hardwood flooring. Pick a stylish rug to catch dirt in its tracks while also adding a design element to the space.

Shoe Space: Place a wooden bench or sturdy coffee table near the door so everyone has a place to sit while removing shoes. Slide a few baskets or bins underneath as an alternate location for storing backpacks and other gear when not in use.

*Take Command:* Create a family command center by adding a small cabinet or desk with a corkboard above. It makes for a perfect spot to stash keys, charge cell phones, open mail, sort school papers and post the family calendar.





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# 5 eye-catching ways to update your home

our home is a reflection of you, and your decor should match your tastes. With some simple home upgrades, you can create the perfect space for you and your family, even if your design preferences change over time.

"When we're designing our ideal home, too often we may only think about what we want others to see and enjoy when they visit," said Jack Goldman, president and CEO of the Hearth, Patio & Barbecue Association (HPBA). "The reality is visitors account for less than 1% of your in-home time." Consider these ideas to get started:

## Add a fresh coat of paint

One of the easiest home improvement projects, a fresh coat of paint can change the entire look of a room. Whether you choose to paint the entire space one new color, opt for an accent wall in a vibrant shade or simply freshen up the trim, paint can go a long way toward adding visual appeal and reflecting your personality. Patterned wallpaper, board and batten, stone and tile can also be added to create textured accents.

#### Update lighting fixtures

Proper lighting can bring rooms to life and make spaces look larger and more welcoming. You can brighten up vour home in a variety of ways, from strategically placing table and floor lamps that fit your design style to replacing older ceiling and wall-mounted fixtures with more modern styles.

### Bring warmth and ambience with a fireplace

"A fireplace is for you and your family, a personal addition that serves you and your household in more ways than you may realize," Goldman said. "October is National Fireplace Month,

a time to celebrate the warmth, comfort and ambiance a fireplace or stove can bring to a home."

More than 3 in 5 homeowners have a fireplace or other hearth product in their homes, according to the HPBA, and including a fireplace in your construction or renovation plans is a gift of warmth, comfort and ambiance you can give yourself.

Whether it's a centerpiece for your living room or family room, or an accent to your bedroom, bathroom or study, a fireplace can provide an artful design element for your home and a safe, reliable heat source in the event of unexpected weather

#### **Upcycle furniture**

You can breathe new life into your current furniture by making simple changes. The easiest would be simply rearranging your pieces and moving some to different rooms to create an updated look. You can also add decorative covers to sofas, chairs, throw pillows and more, or take your upcycling a step further and refinish a bookshelf, table or other wooden furniture with a fresh coat of paint or stain, or give it a more weathered look with some sandpaper.



#### Give cabinetry a fresh look

There are numerous easy ways to update your kitchen and bathroom cabinets to create a more updated look. One of the easiest is swapping out older cabinet pulls and knobs for more modern options. With a variety of finishes stainless, bronze, brushed nickel, black,

copper and more — and styles available, you can match your cabinets to nearly any design style in a matter of minutes.

Adding a coat of stain or paint is also a relatively quick and easy way to update some of the most-used spaces in your home without completely replacing the cabinets.



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# 6 key steps for planning a kitchen remodel

Designing your dream kitchen is an exciting endeavor, but it requires careful planning and consideration. Follow these six essential steps to ensure you create a kitchen that perfectly fits your lifestyle and needs.

Assess your lifestyle: Consider how you use your kitchen. Are you an avid cook? Is it a family gathering space? Do you often host large groups? Understanding your lifestyle will help guide your design choices.

**Evaluate your existing kitchen:** Take a close look at your current kitchen. Identify what you love and what needs improvement. Think about storage, prep surfaces, and any changes you want to make.

**Set your budget:** Determine a realistic budget for your project. Prioritize your needs over wants, but leave room for upgrades and extra touches that catch your eye.

**Select the right professional:** Trust the expertise of a professional who communicates well and understands your vision. A skilled designer can



bring your ideas to life and guide you through the process.

**Plan smartly:** Measure your kitchen's size and consider infrastructure concerns like electrical and plumbing. Focus on workflow and customize storage solutions to fit your family's daily living.

**Avoid common mistakes:** Stay away from overloading with cabinets,

ensure sufficient counter space, and invest in quality materials for critical areas like cabinets and countertops.

Remember to be patient throughout the process and manage your expectations. Renovating can be stressful, but the end result will be worth it. Take your time and make thoughtful decisions, even if it means leaving some décor choices for later.

# Finishing touches for your dream kitchen

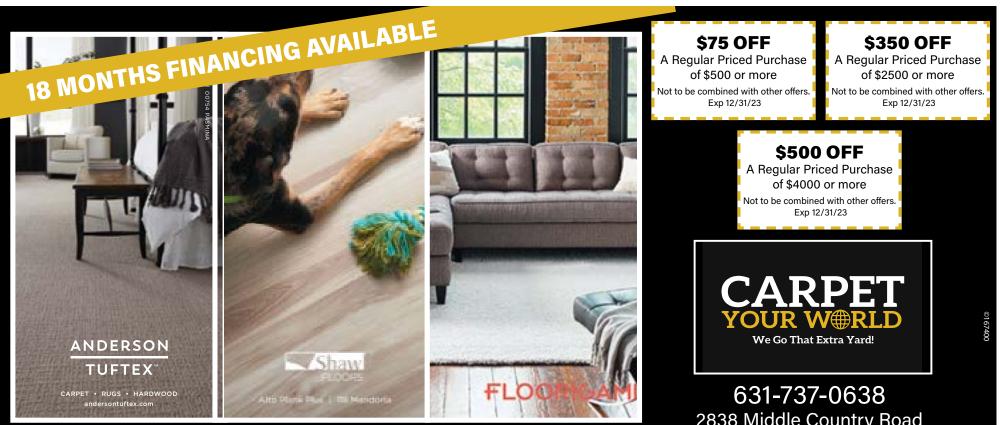
To truly transform your kitchen, pay attention to these key finishing touches:

\* Lighting: Mix different types of lighting for various purposes. Use ambient lighting for mood, task lighting for meal preparation, and decorative lighting for the island and dining table.

\* Hardware: Choose cabinet and drawer knobs and pulls that match your kitchen's style and size.

\* Sinks/faucets: Consider modern features like pull-down spray nozzles, touchless or tap technology, and semi-professional functionality for added convenience.

\* Essentials: Install under-cabinet lighting for countertop work areas, backsplashes for the sink and range, and sufficient electrical outlets, including USB ports for family tech.



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# CALMING COLOR Design inspiration for a comforting, relaxing home

pdating your home can provide the perfect opportunity to explore new design styles or refresh living spaces with a new color scheme. In fact, a coat of paint can help set the mood for entire rooms in your home.

By turning to nature-inspired designs, you can create a sense of comfort and relaxation. A hybrid color, like Valspar's 2024 Color of the Year, Renew Blue, is gentle and airy with a touch of blue to set a restful and meditative mood. The grayed sea green — inspired by fleeting things such as fog, mist, clouds and glacier lakes — is a seasonless and versatile hue that features a mid-tone blue with warm undertones and can be used in outdoor living spaces and four-season rooms alike.

"This mid-tone shade has become popular for wellness environments over the years due to its low saturation level, which evokes a sense of rest and calm," said Sue Kim, Valspar's director of color marketing. "The harmonious green and blue open the possibility for outdoor applications, blurring the boundary between interior and exterior."

To help elevate the mood in your home, consider implementing Renew Blue into one of these popular design trends that can update the look of nearly any of your indoor or outdoor spaces.

## COASTAL

Coastal looks are timeless designs that have remained relevant for years because of their positive correlation to calming beach locations. Perfect for outdoor spaces like the backyard, you can implement a more curated and personal take on the trend by shifting from "typical" coastal design that pairs beachy hues with natural textures like rope, driftwood and wicker to something more classic and natural like the Cape Cod variation by working in some nautical touches like anchors, oars or seashells.



## **MODERN FARMHOUSE**

In the entryway, using beautiful and functional decor, such as unique ceramics and handwoven textiles, helps usher in a modern rustic style. By using timeless tones and accents, as well as layering heritage art, you can create visual mystery while elevating the ordinary to make your home feel warm and welcoming to guests.

## NORDIC COMFORT

Modern Traditional is a style that came together over time, and the Hygge look (pictured above) is a refined take. Decor in this style is comfy: chunky blankets, soft fabrics, pillows, and plants. It pulls elementary cues from traditional farmhouse style but has shaker-inspired elements mixed in and is done with a slightly modern twist. It can make a larger space feel welcoming and warm.

## **MODERN BOHO**

Boho is a nature-loving and freespirited style connected to earthy and botanical elements. From handmade decor to vintage metallic finishes, this style re-imagines the past and elevates everyday spaces like bathrooms into personal retreats designed with wellness in mind.

## PASTEL WABI-SABI

Leaning into the modern sentiment of "less is more," this style reflects a naturally minimalist design aesthetic and showcases color coordination with mood-boosting hues and joyful color. Perfect for nurseries and other spaces that should be bright and welcoming, pieces with pared-back, welcoming shapes and silhouettes that allow quality natural materials to shine are perfect for decorating the room.

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