



Your Kitchen... Love it or Leave it

Written by Jason Capps

THINKING ABOUT A MAJOR CHANGE to your existing kitchen? Contemplating a journey into new kitchen bliss conjures up fantasies and fears, simultaneously for most. With proper planning and design you can create a wonderful showcase for your humble abode, but excitement can turn into stressful inconvenience, and not thinking things through can be downright disastrous. Whether it's a facelift, extreme makeover or anything in-between, the idea of being without the one room in your home "from which all things cometh" can be a trying experience and a major disruption in your family's routine. A series of phases instead of a complete shutdown may be a practical way to approach such a project.

As a caterer and chef, I have seen my fair share of home kitchens. To say I trashed a few would be an understatement. Many make complete sense and are reflections of the owner's lifestyles, an extension of who they are. It may be well lit, cozy, ergonomically correct, but simple. It just feels right and gets used often. Good design and logical flow exist and it works for the family members even as their needs change. Other kitchens are merely rooms of necessity, a place to store and cook food and nothing more. Poor layouts, lack of counter space and faulty equipment rob them of function and versatility. Occupants go there only to drop off dirty plates and it's often overlooked on purpose during a tour of the home. Daily use and entertaining out of this kitchen can be cumbersome and emotionally deflating.

Bigger doesn't always mean better, so knocking out walls may not be necessary. Instead of increasing my kitchen's size, I kept our adjacent breakfast room intact and used the smaller kitchen space wisely. (And remember that running floor tile at a 45-degree angle makes a room appear larger). Here's my top ten list of features and tips that will help transform your kitchen into something special:

Hot and cold water foot petals: No need to use your elbows with hands covered in chicken juice or with a strainer full of hot pasta.

Appliance garage: Keep your toaster, blender and coffee maker on the countertop, but hidden with a roll-top wood door. It can double as a bread box.

Secondary sink: Nice when the other is full of dirty pots or food.

Pot filler: Cold water faucet extension above the stove. You never have to carry a full pot of water from the sink to the stove. Also allow for extra stove clearance, in case you ever use tall pots, 18-inches or more is great.

Horizontal knife rack drawer: Holds all your weapons in place.



Jason Capps is the chef/owner of Greco's Gourmet Catering in McMurray and caters for all occasions. Later this year, he will open Bella Sera by Greco's, a newly constructed, full service banquet facility. Feel free to contact him via email or phone with any of your culinary related questions. Visit www.grecosgourmet.com or call 724-942-9500.

Stowed cutting board drawer: With fold down access door and removable board.

Exterior exhaust: If you can, take the duct/vent out of the house.

Utilities: Run gas and electric to stove area and water supply to refrigerator. You never know which direction you or the next homeowner may go. It's easier and cheaper now. Copious amounts of outlets and switches (with dimmers) along the backsplash and walls offer convenience. Kickboard lighting offers a cozy look and lit floor. Puck lighting under the upper cabinet bottoms are sleek. Finish the cabinet undersides.

Hanging pot racks: It's a space saver. Very cool. Filled with All Clad, even cooler. Just don't forget to use them or they collect dust.

Under counter: Slide out garbage can, beverage cooler, ice chest or spice rack.