

Real wood features long-lasting quality and looks

BY DIANNE CROWNE
Copley News Service

Nothing rejuvenates a kitchen more quickly and dramatically than updating the cabinets. And these days, homeowners can change cabinet colors and styles in more ways than ever. To find out what you need to know when you go shopping, we spoke with several businesses that replace, reface and refinish kitchen cabinets.

New colors and materials
“There have been a lot of changes in the past 10 years,” said Jerry Hocking, kitchen department manager of Carter Bros. Lumber in Peoria, Ill. “Rollouts, glass doors, pantry cabinets, sink tilt-outs, staggered heights and more new amenities add pizzazz to kitchens.”

Beautiful oak, hickory, maple and cherry can be finished as natural, honey, frosted and pickled. In addition, Hocking added, a new ultraviolet curing process ensures a hard, durable finish.

Rod Milligan, owner of Cabinetland in Springfield, Ill., also enjoys the new range of choices.

“There are some really neat features out there that make the space more functional, more fun and easier,” Milligan said.

Among the amenities he lists are spice inserts; organizers for utensils, lids, pots, recycling and trash; and cabinets that elevate the dishwasher or hold wicker baskets — all designed to meet cooks’ needs.

Budget

Choose the quality of cabinetry that meets your needs and investment goals.

Nearly all the experts agree that particleboard is initially less expensive but solid wood or wood-veneered plywood is a longer-lasting investment. This is because the structures of these products are substantially different.

“Wood is more structurally sound than particleboard,” said Wendell Meyer, an independent contractor who specializes in home renovation and fine carpentry.

“Particleboard will bow or warp when exposed to the least amount of moisture, bow or bend when holding any weight at all and resist nearly every finish due to its high glue content,” he said.

By contrast, Meyer said, wood is strong and stable. “In my estimation of 40 years’ experience as a woodworker, cabinetmaker,

millwright and carpenter, particleboard has no viable place nor application in the home with the exception in some cases as a countertop base,” Meyer said. “Wood has running fibers, which give it strength and stability; it has both longitudinal and latitudinal substance and structure. Particleboard is thousands of pieces glued chip to chip. You can’t nail into it and can’t screw into it.”

Still, Meyer knows the expense of a new all-wood kitchen and suggests options.

“The least-expensive option is to paint existing cabinets,” he said. “Whether your cabinets are wood, particleboard, metal or fiberglass, it will cost only about 15 to 20 percent of the price of new cabinets to clean, prepare and paint them.”

If your existing cabinets are wood, consider refinishing them for as little as one-third the price of new cabinets, Meyer said. Or simply add a hardwood veneer, such as a cherry, to cabinets that are otherwise in good shape.

If you want new cabinets but want to keep the cost down, Meyer recommended buying unfinished wood cabinets with simple profiles (not a lot of decorative corners and edges on the doors) from a local supplier and hiring a contractor to finish and hang them.

This way, Meyer said, you wind up with an aesthetically pleasing, real-wood cabinet most likely with a solid wood frame and hardwood veneer over plywood sides, tops and bottoms. It will take any stain and hold up alongside even the most expensive cabinets.

The refacing option

If you like your existing cabinets and your kitchen layout, you can purchase new doors and hardware and add a Formica covering to your cabinets’ sides and bottoms for about half the cost of replacing your cabinets, said Brad Zeiger, owner of Cabinet Restylers.

Zeiger factors labor and any associated plumbing, flooring and wall covering repair or replacement into the cost of a new installation.

Another cabinet refacer, Pat Dietsch, takes a different approach, however. Dietsch, who does not always recommend refacing, describes the considerations involved in choosing refacing over replacing.

“The structure of a cabinet is in the frame and the box,” Dietsch said. “The



CNS Photo courtesy of Aristokraft

New cabinets offer features like built-in organizers, spice racks and pull-out drawers for trash and recycling. Make sure you take your kitchen measurements with you when you visit the dealer’s showroom.

door is just decoration. It’s the box that makes the difference as to whether you should replace or reface.”

If you have particleboard cabinets and replace them with a comparable product, it’s probably not worth refacing, he says, because the cost of replacing and refacing would be about the same.

“If you have a good, solid, wood-cabinet kitchen, however — that is, the boxes themselves are wood — don’t go downhill in the structural integrity of your kitchen by replacing your cabinets with particleboard cabinets,” Dietsch said. “For investment purposes, you may have more in your old wood-boxed kitchen than you think. Wood is considerably less likely than particleboard to droop, sag, flake, absorb moisture and fall apart. Either replace your wood cabinets with comparable wood boxes or consider refacing as an option.”

Measurements, questions

Consider your investment goals and budget before you begin. Are you planning to enjoy your new cabinets for

the next several years, or are you updating for resale?

All designers will measure your new kitchen space, but you can get the ball rolling faster if you take some rough measurements to your first showroom visit.

Obtain comparable bids. Know the exact composition of the door and door insert if applicable; sides, bottoms, and tops; drawers; and the mechanics of the drawer glides, such as side- or bottom-mounted. Make sure all quotes are for like products and services. And ask how long your specifications will be kept on file if you’re not ready to decide.

Read warranty documents carefully. What can be replaced, how and why? What are the limits? Does the factory or the store fulfill the warranty?

Determine who will install your cabinets — the cabinet designer or your own contractor.

Construction products, such as solvent-based and water-based adhesives, paints, stains, vinyls and other laminates, may expel chemicals, volatile organic compounds or formaldehyde that may affect your

Race to the finish

If properly maintained, hardwood floors can last a lifetime. To make sure the finish on your floor is still doing its job, test an area where the finish is likely to be most worn. Pour a tablespoon of water onto the floor.



Does the water bead up so that you can wipe it up without a trace? If so, your floor’s finish is fine.



Does the water soak into the wood after a few minutes, darkening the floor only slightly? Don’t panic, your floor’s finish is only partially worn. Immediate refinishing probably isn’t necessary, but keep a close eye on the floor.



Does the water immediately soak into the wood leaving a dark spot? If so, your floor’s finish is seriously worn and it’s time to recoat or refinish.

SOURCE: Hardwood Manufacturers Association

Copley News Service / Paul Hor

family. If in doubt, request MSD sheets — manufacturers’ lists of specific products’ ingredients — from your supplier before installation.

Agree on a schedule.

Know how long it will take for your cabinets or cabinet faces to be delivered, how many days your kitchen will be torn up and how long it will take to replace any parts that arrive damaged.



WORLD INSPECTION NETWORK

Find It First

- Preventative Home Maintenance Evaluation
- Home Inspection Services

(231) 938-0700

www.wini.com/traversecity

2-1.hi.784385

See our booth at the Home Builders Expo Feb. 19 & 20



HAMILTON FABRICS

LARGE SHIPMENTS FROM NORTH CAROLINA ARRIVING REGULARLY!

FRESHEN UP YOUR HOME WITH SOME NEW TEXTILES

NEW LOCATION!

1215 Woodmere Avenue • Traverse City, MI 49686

Tel: 231-922-9925 Fax: 231-922-9926

2/1.784601.hi

Residential Constructions Solutions, Inc.

Provides Homeowners & Building Professionals Solutions to their Building Needs.

Detailed Project Estimates
Computerized Construction Documents:
Construction Drawings using 3-D CAD Software
Project Specifications/Scope of Work
Sworn Statements, Lien Waivers
Builder & Sub-Contractor Contracts,
Project Scheduling.

Streamlined Bid Procurement via our secure Web Site:
Post your project on our Web Site. Builders/Subcontractors can review complete plans and specifications and provide bids.
Project Consultation
Project Management/Supervision

Residential Construction Solutions
a division of
Crummel Construction Inc.

Contact Us for More Information
Phone: 231-943-0592
Fax: 231-943-9372
email: info@rcstc.com

H 12-1 784670

RICHARDSON BUILDING COMPANY, INC.


231-267-4800

BUILD • REMODEL • DESIGN
KITCHENS, BATHS, ADDITIONS, GARAGES, DECKS


H 12-1 784667

The Only Fireplace That Heats Like A Furnace!

• LISTEN TO THE SING OF LIFE •




FIREPLACE XTRODINAIR™



Ultimate Performance
The Fireplace Xtrodinair clean burning fireplace is rated as the highest heat output fireplace ever tested to EPA standards!

Unique Design
The unique Posi-pressure system uniformly heats your entire home, using a quite remote blower.

Unmatched Beauty
Customized your fireplace with 24 karat gold or satin black finish. Optional etched glass enhances the huge viewing glass doors.



FIREPLACE & STOVE CENTER

901 S. Airport Rd.
Traverse City
(231) 946-2440

The Ultimate Fireplace!

2/1-784685.HI