

Kitchen Remodeling: What It Costs, How Long It Takes, and What to Expect





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Kitchen Remodeling: What It Costs, How Long It Takes, and What to Expect

Ask ten homeowners what a kitchen remodel costs and you will get ten numbers, most of them wrong in the same direction. Ask how long one takes and you will hear “about six weeks” — a figure that describes only the stretch when a crew is physically in the house, not the months of designing, ordering, and waiting that bracket it.

That gap is where remodels go sideways. Not because contractors are dishonest, but because homeowners budget for what they can picture. The real cost is driven by cabinets; the real calendar is driven by lead times. Neither is obvious until you are in it.

Here is what the data actually says — and what to settle before you sign anything.



What A Kitchen Remodel Costs In 2026

The most reliable current figures come from the 2026 U.S. Houzz Kitchen Trends Study, a survey of 1,780 homeowners published in January 2026. Median spend breaks down like this:

Project type	Median spend
Major kitchen remodel	\$55,000
Major remodel — larger kitchen	\$75,000
Major remodel — smaller kitchen	\$46,000
Minor kitchen remodel	\$20,000

Two cautions. These are medians and half of all projects cost more. And regional spread is enormous: a \$55,000 kitchen in the Midwest is considerably more expensive on either coast. Treat a national number as a starting point, never a quote.

Where the money goes matters more than the total. Using the budget breakdown commonly cited from the National Kitchen & Bath Association, cabinetry and hardware absorb roughly 29% of a typical kitchen budget. This is the largest single line by a wide margin. Installation labor runs about 17%, appliances about 14%, countertops about 10%.

That concentration is why one policy change is currently reshaping kitchen quotes across the country.

Is A Kitchen Remodel Worth It?

It depends what you mean by worth it.

The Cost vs. Value Report, published annually by Remodeling and the Journal of Light Construction, is the industry benchmark for resale return. Its most recent national averages:

Project type	Job cost	Resale value	Recouped
Minor kitchen remodel, midrange	\$28,458	\$32,141	113%
Major kitchen remodel, midrange	\$82,793	\$42,130	51%
Major kitchen remodel, upscale	\$164,104	\$58,561	36%

Notice the shape. A minor remodel is one of the only interior projects in the report that returns more than it costs. Triple the spend and you recover about half; multiply it by six and you recover a third.

But “minor” is doing real work in that sentence, and it does not mean cosmetic. The report defines it as a 200-square-foot kitchen with 30 linear feet of cabinetry: boxes stay in place, fronts and hardware are replaced, new range and refrigerator, new countertops, new flooring, fresh paint. That is a \$28,000 project.

The honest read: if you are remodeling to sell, refresh rather than gut. If you are remodeling because you actually live there — which is most people — spend what the kitchen is worth to you, and treat resale value as a partial rebate rather than a return on investment.

How Long Does A Kitchen Remodel Take?

Two clocks run at the same time, and homeowners only ever picture the second one.

Total project time starts at your first design meeting. Construction time is the crew in your house. Contractors typically report construction windows of:

COSMETIC REFRESH	🕒 2-4 WEEKS
STANDARD REMODEL	🕒 6-8 WEEKS
FULL GUT	🕒 10-16 WEEKS

Total project time generally runs two to three times the construction window. The “six-week kitchen” is realistically a four-month commitment.

What fills the difference is lead time, not labor:

STOCK CABINETS

🕒 1–3 WEEKS

SEMI-CUSTOM AND CUSTOM CABINETS

🕒 8–16 WEEKS

STONE COUNTERTOPS

🕒 2–4 WEEKS

That last one surprises everyone. Stone is measured against your installed cabinets, not a drawing, so every stone kitchen has a stretch with cabinets in and plywood where the counters go.

The single most effective thing you can do: **lock every selection and place every order before demolition begins.** The most common reason a kitchen sits half-finished is a crew waiting on a back-ordered cabinet run.





Permits, Code, And What Is Hiding Behind Your Walls

Cosmetic work — paint, hardware, like-for-like cabinet swaps — usually needs no permit. You will almost always need one for moving a wall, relocating plumbing, or adding electrical circuits. The rules are strictly local: call your building department, or make your contractor confirm in writing.

One rule with no exceptions: never pull the permit yourself. A contractor may suggest it because a homeowner permit moves faster. It also transfers liability for the work onto you. Decline, politely and every time.

Older kitchens frequently need electrical work the original bid never mentioned, because the 2023 National Electrical Code raised the bar. Adoption varies by state, so verify locally:

- ✓ GFCI protection is now required for all kitchen receptacles, not only those serving countertops
- ✓ A minimum of two 20-amp small-appliance branch circuits, which cannot also run lighting
- ✓ AFCI protection on 15- and 20-amp, 120-volt kitchen circuits
- ✓ The requirement for island receptacles was removed, though provisions for future installation are still required

In plain terms: bringing a 1985 kitchen up to code can mean new circuits and sometimes panel work. This is the number one source of mid-project change orders. Ask every bidder to state in writing whether electrical upgrades are included.

Budget a **10–20% contingency**. In a house over thirty years old, treat the top of that range as mandatory rather than optional.

Hiring The Right Contractor

Verify license and insurance through your state licensing board, not through the contractor's own website. Get three bids against one identical written scope. If each bidder is pricing a slightly different project, the numbers cannot be compared and the exercise is theater.

Be skeptical of the bid that lands far below the others. It usually means something was left out, and you will meet that item again later, as a change order, at a worse price.

Before you sign, confirm four things: payment tied to completed milestones rather than calendar dates, a written change-order process, a stated start and substantial-completion date, and lien waivers from subcontractors as they are paid.

The Short Version

Budget from medians and adjust for your market. Order everything before demolition. Keep 15% in reserve. Get the electrical scope in writing. And decide early whether you are remodeling for resale or for yourself, because the two point at genuinely different projects.

The homeowners who come out of a remodel happy are almost always the ones who knew what normal looked like before it started.



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