



# THE HEART OF THE HOME

by KIM EDWARDS  
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SIEGUZI INTERIOR DESIGNS

## KITCHEN RENOS RANGE FROM SMALL CHANGES TO A COMPLETE OVERHAUL

Today's eat-in kitchens are where family members gather not just to refuel, but to discuss their day, organize their schedules, do homework and entertain. If your kitchen does not lend itself to these tasks, it may be time for a re-invention. You may think this means tearing out a kitchen completely from an old home and replacing it with something ultra-modern and efficient. This is what renovation guru Mike Holmes often suggests homeowners do. He writes in his renovation tome *Make it Right*, that often people underestimate how much needs to be done, especially in older homes, so often gutting the kitchen can be the best option. However, for those who simply want to change the look of their kitchen, without making significant infrastructure changes, it is possible to revamp a kitchen efficiently and on a budget.

It's important to personalize your design to get optimum functionality. Choosing a look from a magazine (like this one) may seem tempting, but will it be the best layout for you? Think about whether you are renovating the kitchen to make it more efficient and attractive for yourself, or to make your home easier to sell. This will inform many of your design choices. Here's a look at the range of aspects to consider.



## IT IS POSSIBLE to revamp a kitchen efficiently and on a budget



### the golden triangle

No, this is not a mysterious zone off the shore of Bermuda. This is the space where people do most of their work in the kitchen, the space between the stove, fridge and sink. “You always have to have the triangle,” says Patricia Horning, Owner of Fairway Kitchens. However, the traditional trinity may become less important for homeowners who rely more on other appliances like a dishwasher (which should be placed near a sink for easy rinsing), microwave, coffee maker, grill or whatever else they use.

### the island

Islands are often on the wish list of people renovating their kitchens. However, not every space is well suited for one, like most condos with galley-style kitchens, says Gary Potter, President of Kingsmill Kitchens. “Let’s face it, a small condo could not have an island,” he says.

However, in a house with a large room, “you can only walk so far, so an island is quite good.”

### countertops

While a granite countertop is often coveted and a bit of a status symbol, it has its drawbacks as well. It needs to be sealed regularly, according to Holmes, otherwise it becomes porous and can be a magnet for bacteria. As well, owners have to consider the weight of the countertop if they are not replacing the cabinets. “Some cabinets do not do well when you put something hundreds of pounds heavier on top of it – it’s not that easy to do,” says Robin Siegeman, Owner of Sieguzi Interior Designs. Often-overlooked countertop options that are functional, sanitary and look great are wood butcher-block style countertops (wood is naturally bacteria-resistant), as well as plastic laminates and quartz composite.



**cabinets**

Replacing one’s kitchen cabinets gives the room a significant face-lift. But what kind of cabinets to choose? Function-wise, adding recycling and garbage roll-out units can be handy. Adding to your existing storage is useful for appliances, dishes and bulk food purchases. But what kind of cabinets are the best to buy? Custom-made cabinets last longer than manufactured and are often of better quality, with stronger hinges. However, Holmes writes that sometimes so-called custom-cabinet companies will say their product is made-to-order, but will take your order and buy your cabinets pre-manufactured at a big box store, selling them to you with a higher markup than if you just bought them yourself! It’s important to do your research and get references to avoid this.

What type of material to choose? There are many options, but Potter recommends avoiding oak. “Oak seems to be out of date, I just never do oak.” If you are simply looking to revamp what you have, Siegerman suggests repainting instead of refacing existing cabinets, especially if you send your cabinets out to get repainted professionally.

**sink**

People love to have their sink near the window, so that they can fantasize of being in a far-away place while doing the dishes, writes Holmes. However, Potter says that often he will put in a corner sink, which doesn’t necessarily correspond with the window. It all depends on the room’s layout. Also, switching from a single-bowl sink to a double bowl, as well as adding pull-out faucets or sprayers can add convenience. Moving or

replacing a sink necessitates a plumbing permit, which can add to the renovation’s overall cost.

**flooring**

Choosing the right floor is key to a kitchen. This is an area that will get a lot of wear-and-tear, so it’s important to choose wisely. Cork, ceramic, natural stone or porcelain tiles are often a good choice, writes Holmes. Laminate flooring is usually a bad choice, as it is not durable in an often-moist kitchen.

**décor notes**

“People try to throw around terms like ‘timeless’ and ‘will always be in style’. There is nothing that is timeless and always in style. Everything goes in and everything goes out,” says Siegerman, even the most basic of kitchen looks. Take, she says, the basic white kitchen. In the 1970s this featured heavy glazing, ornate door styles and crown molding. In the 1980s, the trend was white laminate doors, with oak pulls. Now these looks seem dated and are being pulled down in favour of white with a cleaner, less-embellished look that is much more streamlined.

Simple changes can make a big impact. For an inexpensive pick-me-up, Siegerman recommends a nude backsplash that can cost a mere \$30 to \$40 a sq. ft.

Kitchen renovations can range from the low hundreds to over \$75,000, depending on the type of work being done. However, careful planning can ensure that homeowners get the most for their money and enjoy this heart of the home for years to come.