

# The Kitchen Cabinet Cheat Sheet

Choosing kitchen cabinets can be a difficult task because of the sheer amount of options out there, but having a basic understanding before you go shopping will save you time, money and a lot of aggravation. With that in mind, [cityhammer.com](http://cityhammer.com), New York's #1 Remodeling Directory, is proud to present the **Kitchen Cabinet Cheat Sheet!**

## [Kitchen Contractors in New York](#)

### **Cabinetry Industry**

Americans spent roughly \$23 billion on cabinetry in 2006 according to Catalina Research. Based on our discussions with New York and New Jersey area contractors, cabinets typically make up 40% to 50% of the average kitchen remodel cost for the homeowner. The major variables that a kitchen expert can help a homeowner navigate through are style, project cost, quality, size, species and finish, and construction.

### **Styles of Cabinetry**

There are so many different variations and styles of cabinets, it would be impossible to list them all here, but you should have an idea of what's out there so that you can decide what would work with the existing components and look of your kitchen.

You will see things like the traditional Flat Panel, the Beaded Door which incorporates a vertical texture of beading on a simple frame. There will be recessed doors with flat panels suspended inside the doors' perimeters and Full Overlays where the doors drawer design are given prominent placement because they cover most of the face frame.

If you are interested in a more open look, consider Mullion Doors which have glass inserts in place of the typical panel of solid wood, usually accented with vertical and horizontal bars that divide the glass like a windowpane.

Keep in mind also that there are two main options for framing. Framed cabinets traditionally have a front frame which juts out and this is where the door is attached. Frameless cabinets, also known as European-style, have doors that are attached to the sides of the cabinets themselves using pin and dowel construction as opposed to glue, staples or dowel and screw.

### **Project Cost and Budgeting**

If you go by the statistic mentioned of 40% to 50% going towards cabinets for the average kitchen remodel, you can pretty much figure out the dollar amount to allocate based on the total budget you are planning for your kitchen. Depending on how much that leaves you to spend, you can choose between 3 basic price range levels of cabinets which we'll discuss in the next section below.

### **Quality of Cabinetry**

The 3 basic categories of cabinet quality levels are:

**Stock:** Stock cabinets are the best-selling type of cabinetry in the United States for two main reasons; they are widely available at stores like Home Depot and Lowes and they are much cheaper than custom or semi-custom cabinets in most cases. The downside is, what you see is what you get. While the superstores are carrying a greater selection than ever, you still won't get as much choice in terms of woods, colors, styles and finishes as you would with a custom product.

**Semi-custom:** This option will give you more choice than stock but the customization options will be

somewhat limited. That said, you will have the ability to decide on aspects of the cabinetry such as reduced or increased depths, whether or not the interiors match, or you can choose more intricate details like inverted frames. This is a small but growing segment of the cabinetry industry.

**Custom:** Custom Cabinets give you unlimited choice in all details but will obviously cost more than the other options. You can choose dimensions and shape, pick wood species and finishing, as well as work with the carpenter to add the kind of detailing that will make them truly customized to your taste and overall kitchen aesthetics.

### **Size and Measurement**

This is one area of remodeling where you will definitely want a professional to do the measuring for you. You should go out to the showrooms with a good notion of the amount of space and the shape of your kitchen, but the final measurements, even if you're choosing stock, need to be precise. This will also help with getting estimates so you can gauge whether or not the cabinets you are looking at will fit your budget.

### **Species and Finish Options**

Much like wood flooring, there are a myriad of different wood species available but certain woods are considered classic for the kitchen. These include maple, cherry, hickory and oak. Obviously, having a solid wood cabinet as opposed to a composite material covered by a wood veneer is preferable, as a veneer is only 1/32 of an inch of wood. A veneer gives the cabinet face a more homogenized look and can protect the cabinet from climate and moisture. Other finishes include painted, stained and glazed wood. Glazes and stains can even out the natural character of wood species or change the color of the underlying material to better match its surroundings in the room.

### **Construction of Cabinets**

There is a mind-boggling array of shapes and sizes for cabinets and what they can hold. With stock products, there will be less variety, but in general, when visiting a showroom or store, you'll see everything from pullout shelves for pans, to wine racks and vertical dividers for cookie sheets or trays to pull-out bins and the ever popular lazy susan cabinets. There are also several ways to go with a tall vertical pantry if storage space is limited horizontally.

### **Some Key Cabinetry Terms**

Without getting carried away on terminology, there are a few words and phrases that will be informative for the cabinet buyer.

**Medium Density Fiberboard:** An engineered wood often used for the shelving within the cabinet because of its tighter and smoother surface.

**Vinyl Laminate:** The most common type of lining material for cabinet interiors, it's thicker than melamine and is extremely resistant to abrasions or moisture.

**Melamine Laminate:** The durable covering material for doors and drawers, thicker than vinyl thus adding strength and protection.

**Thermofoil:** The flexible vinyl product with a sticky bottom that adheres to MDF of engineered wood surfaces on the door or drawer making them easy to clean and more durable.

**Soffit:** The area between the top of the cabinets and the ceiling itself which is usually a foot high; also known as the bulkhead.

**V-Groove:** A style of door design with ridges or vertical grooves that can allow the finish technique to be more easily observed.

## **Happy Shopping**

So now you've got the Cheat Sheet, the budget, a good idea of what's out there in terms of choice, and some of the terms and jargon required for your cabinet shopping adventure. Remember to use a qualified carpenter or kitchen and bath contractor for estimates and measurements and to keep track of the expense relative to the total kitchen remodeling project cost and you should be just fine.

Mitch Mayer  
Staff Writer, [cityhammer.com](http://cityhammer.com)