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Big Looks on a Budget

Cooking up a kitchen redo? This family got the most bang for their buck by building a plan and sticking to it.

Your kitchen's look is a little long on the vine? Don't despair; follow the lead of Mary Helen and Donald Swinney. With careful planning and a rock-solid spreadsheet, they turned their outdated cooking space into a beautiful spot ripe for gathering.



before

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after



1 From Trendy to Timeless

The Swinneys' Georgia home was more than a decade old when they decided to update their kitchen. "It looked fine when we did it the first time," Mary Helen says. "But how much ivy can you take?" She worked with Cartersville designer Beverly Baribault to create a room that is less trendy, more classic, and utterly inviting.

First step: Remove the wallpaper. Now the walls are painted a rich neutral, Old Salem Gray by Benjamin Moore.

Cost: \$103 for paint supplies, \$550 for labor

2 Storage With Style

New cabinets weren't in the original plan. Mary Helen and Donald liked the basic layout and look of the originals but had tired of the bright white surface. They compared the cost of supplies and labor to have the old ones painted to the cost of new cabinets. Eventually, they decided to fork over the money—a wise investment in the long run. "Hopefully, it's going to be the last time we redo the room," Mary Helen says. "New cabinets really made a big difference."

Beverly suggested the two-tone treatment, using a dark cherry finish on top and an aged green stain on the bottom. "At first I was a bit nervous, but Beverly said 'You'll love it!' and she was right," says Mary Helen.

Cost: \$7,389 for cabinets and installation

3 Top It Off

Using granite on the countertops and backsplash gives the space a more seamless appearance. Granite is a great choice when you want a material that will stand the test of time because it is impervious to scratches and stains.

Cost: \$6,500 for materials and installation



left: To keep one color from overpowering your kitchen, try a stain on upper cabinets and paint the bottom ones.

Tips for Sticking to Your Budget

- Prioritize your spending. Splurge on granite and save on cabinets. Or keep your original floors and get new appliances. It's a lot less stressful to make these decisions ahead of time.
- Build in wiggle room. Designate 10% to 15% of your total budget to cover surprise expenses.
- If the actual cost for something, such as retiling, is much higher than the estimate you were given, don't be afraid to ask your contractor for a deduction from somewhere else to compensate.
- Maintain a spending spreadsheet to keep track of every dollar and to keep your cash flow in check.

Layout Lesson

One of the best ways to save money on a kitchen renovation is to keep the appliances in the same place. If you move plumbing or electrical hookups, expect labor costs to go up substantially.

The Swinneys liked the floor plan of their kitchen except for one major problem: the cooktop. Its original location, on the island in the center of the room, was a mistake that had to be remedied. "It wasn't functional at all. There was no workspace!" Mary Helen says. They replaced it with a new stainless steel range, located where the double oven used to be. Other new appliances: a refrigerator, microwave, and dishwasher. They also added a sink and faucet.

Cost: \$5,385.72

Mix and Match

Removing the old island left a hole where the down-draft used to be in the middle of the hardwood floor. New wood was installed and the surface sanded and refinished to match the rest of the room.

Beverly found a furniture piece with a marble top to take the place of the island. It adds additional workspace but can be moved if needed.

Cost: \$712 for floor refinishing
\$480 for the new island



For More Info Cook up your dream kitchen slide show and sources: southernliving.com/august2007