

## Freshening up your kitchen décor can be easy

The kitchen is the new living room, with much of the entertaining and family events centered around the kitchen. Your kitchen decor is the combined influence of many different aspects including the fixtures, cabinets, hardware, paint (or wallpaper), flooring materials and furniture and the overall layout of the room. Colors, textures, materials, lighting and space come together to give the room either an inviting atmosphere or one that makes you want to exit in a hurry. If your kitchen isn't to your liking, don't sweat it - you can make a dramatic impact without necessarily remodeling from the ground up. Here are some kitchen decorating tips to consider for your home:

- **Walls:** Take down dated wallpaper and paint walls; paint dark cabinets a lighter color to brighten the room. If cabinet doors are badly damaged or hopelessly outdated, keep the cabinets and replace just the doors.

- **Declutter:** Remove the clutter from countertops, corners, tables, etc., and move out underused and unnecessary furniture. The resulting clean surfaces and open spaces give you more workspace, and the clean look is more inviting.

- **Hardware:** A quick and easy fix is to change the knobs and pulls on kitchen cabinets and drawers. Within an hour and for very little money you can have a new look.

- **Light fixtures:** Change out your dated kitchen and dining area light fixtures to give the rooms brighter light and an updated look.

- **Window coverings:** Less is more. Remove those lacy drapes. Simple curtain panels or tailored Roman shades on windows provide a cleaner, updated look and let in more light.

- **Floors:** Wood-look laminate planks that lock together are popular, as are ceramic tiles. Check flooring stores to see the huge variety of flooring choices, including renewable "green" sources such as bamboo.

- **Kitchen countertops:** Granite might be out of your budget, but there are other options. New laminates have patterns that look similar to stone, and a relatively new procedure for painting worn out laminate countertops can give them a more modern color or the look of stone. If you have a small kitchen, however, don't rule out granite too quickly. Check into granite or other stone slab remnants that stone yards have left over from big jobs, or consider using granite tiles.

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a mirror when they're not turned on.

- **Faucets** in oil-rubbed bronze or brushed nickel for a rich look, and smart faucets with that turn the water flow on and off automatically when your hands pass over a sensor.

- **Sophisticated sound systems, fireplaces and chandeliers** to complete the luxurious transformation.

- **Appliances:** Change out appliances to both freshen up the look and improve the efficiency of your kitchen. If you can't afford stainless steel, both white and black appliances are stylish. Watch for sales at major department and appliance stores and big box home improvement stores.

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