



## How to Find Your Kitchen Style

If you're planning to remodel your kitchen, you've got to start somewhere: Here's how to find inspiration and start narrowing it down

When most homeowners embark on a kitchen remodel, they spend endless hours collecting inspiring kitchen photos. But this doesn't necessarily help a person figure out what they want, and can even cause confusion. Most people don't have a favorite single look. The tough part of the process is learning to narrow down the options and hone in on what you want *your* dream kitchen to look like.

Collect images at random. Collect images that speak to you emotionally without thinking about why (at least for right now). Believe me, there's a pattern there — you may not be able to see it at first, but a pattern will show itself. You may find that a whole bunch of your kitchen inspiration images may need to be added to an ideabook for a future farmhouse or weekend getaway, but don't skip over them just because they don't relate to this project, save them for later.

Don't edit yourself (yet). Don't make yourself nuts from the get-go by trying to edit as you collect. Collect with reckless abandon *first* and edit *later*. Editing yourself while you gather inspiration is certain death for creativity.

Organize (but only if you want to). It's OK to be unorganized and even a little messy — this is creativity after all! If you are fabulously organized, then you're a step ahead, but for those who aren't, don't sweat it. There's time to go back and label it later.

Start looking for a pro. For some homeowners, the right thing to do is hire a professional out of the gate and have him or her help you through this inspiration-gathering phase. Some homeowners even hand this off completely to a designer, and it's the designer's job to listen, interpret and collect inspiration for the client and bring it back for approval.

Categorize. Once you have a fair number of inspiration images to work with, go back through them and put them into loose categories. You can categorize by style: Maybe you seem to fall on the fence between vintage and modern. Or maybe you find that you have a bunch of images of kitchens with dark wood floors. You can create a collection dedicated

completely to islands or kitchen banquette seating. One for lighting, one for wallpaper, etc.

Edit. Go back through those folders and ideabooks and see if you still respond emotionally to the images within.

If it's been a while since you started gathering inspiration and you've looks at hundreds of spaces, your taste might have changed without you even realizing it. Ruthless editing can really help clarify things ... you'll look at a room and say "Why on earth did I save *that* photo?" If you can't remember and it doesn't speak to you any longer, ditch it.

Collect images with intention. Now that you've collected at random, categorized and edited, go back through all your saved photos, and visit all your old online haunts — and search images for specific items.

Look only for glass-front cabinets, industrial hoods or island lighting ... not at the image as a whole. You might not like an overall room *at all*, but one element could be exactly what you want. Pull inspiration images and think "don't look at the wall color or the cabinet style; just look at the hood" or "look at the way the crown molding transitions around the beam and hood" or something very specific like that. Then edit again.

Style is easier to recognize with your eyes than with words: You know it when you see it, and the photo that inspires you most can often surprise you. Think you know your kitchen style? Check out these guides to a dozen favorite kitchen design themes, provided by the website Houzz. Type in the "category" and you can see hundreds of pictures to see if that is what appeals to you.

Farmhouse kitchens. Warm and homey farmhouses anchored a life on the land, and they still offer great functionality and comfort. Their open shelving, wide sinks, classic flooring and big kitchen table make them easy to work in and easy to love.

Rustic kitchens. "Worn," "distressed" and "rough hewn" may not be the first words that come to mind when we think of kitchens. But today rustic kitchens rival the classic white kitchen in popularity — thanks to their timber, stone, brick, vintage appliances and fireplaces.

Modern kitchens. Definitions of "modern" vary widely, but when we think of modern kitchen designs, we often think of frameless cabinets, sleek and

simple hardware, strong horizontal lines and a lack of ornamentation, with the natural beauty of the materials shining through.

**Traditional kitchens.** Traditional kitchens are defined by their details, which can include arches, decorative moldings and corbels, raised-panel cabinets, a mix of antique finishes and furniture-like turned legs — even a chandelier. Whether they have a classic American or old-world flavor, they still carry the stamp of their owners' personal style.

**Contemporary kitchens.** Contemporary kitchens can be very sleek, but while a purely modern kitchen often celebrates structure and grid, a contemporary kitchen is often more playful in form and finishes, including elements of other styles and creating its own reflection of the times.

**Transitional kitchens.** Think of a transitional kitchen as the great moderator. With the warmth and welcome of traditional design and the clean, simple lines of contemporary style, transitional spaces project balance and harmony. Because they offer a great deal of flexibility, they're a great choice for homeowners whose taste spans the two.

**Craftsman kitchens.** Craftsman style arose in the early 20th century as a reaction to the mass-produced fussiness of the Victorian era. Its rich woods, built-ins, handcrafted tiles and well-made simplicity continue to charm us.

**Cottage kitchens.** Cozy, happy and unpretentious, a cottage kitchen harks back to simpler times and evokes a sense of easy, carefree living. Beadboard, soft colors, vintage hardware, wood floors and colorful accents and curtains will infuse your kitchen with cottage comfort.

**Paris bistro kitchens.** If you long for a sugar-laced café au lait on Rue Monmartre, why not bring a little Parisian style into your house? Intimate kitchen lighting, pretty cookware on display, tile floors and a striped awning ought to do it.

**Classic kitchens.** What is classic? The answer is as varied as cooks are. Still, white or cream kitchen cabinets, simple architectural details and black accents offer a blank slate that homeowners can personalize with contemporary, traditional and eclectic touches as they see fit.

**Mediterranean-style kitchens.** Flared hoods, hand-painted tile, warm wood cabinets, beamed ceilings and arched cooking alcoves are just some of

the features that put Spanish revival kitchens on the most-wanted list.

Eclectic kitchens. Do you rebel against styles and refuse pigeonholes? It's your house; you can mix and match for your own distinct kitchen style however you please. The trick: Be a rebel *with* a cause. Get ideas for a very personal kitchen, with touches of modern and rustic styles, well-traveled flair, humor and irreverence.

It may seem like a lot to narrow down your dream kitchen, but with a little abandon, a little preparation, and help from your contractor, your dream kitchen can easily become your reality.