



Sink time into the kitchen

Given the popularity of TV cooking shows, renters are developing a taste for sophistication when it comes to the kitchen in their rental. Quality tenants want a beautiful and functional kitchen and they are prepared to pay a higher rent for one too, **Louise Richardson reports.**

THEY SAY KITCHENS SELL HOMES – therefore a well-planned and attractively designed kitchen will do the same for a prospective tenant. While it's sensible to ensure the kitchen in your rental is as smart and hard-working as possible – both for securing quality tenants and bringing in more rent – it's also important not to over-capitalise on this crucial space. We look at what investors need to know when replacing a tired kitchen and the latest tips and tricks to get champagne design on a beer budget.

MAKE SURE YOU BUY THE BEST QUALITY YOU CAN AFFORD AND USE A BUILDER WHO IS EXPERIENCED WITH INSTALLING FLAT-PACK KITCHENS.

– HAYLEY DRYLAND



The 'work triangle' is a thing of the past.

DESIGN AND BUDGET

August & Co kitchen designer Hayley Dryland says before committing to a design, it is crucial to understand for whom you are creating the kitchen; is it a family home or an upmarket executive residence? This will dictate the size, layout and level of surfaces you will install.

The base amount for a professionally designed bespoke kitchen is around \$5,000 with some landlords paying up to \$20,000 in high-end rentals, Dryland says.

“Those tenants might be executives who do a lot of entertaining and they’ll be looking for something up-market with a scullery, walk-in pantry and other luxuries. Aesthetics and quality are important to them and they’ll probably want induction stovetops, whereas gas is much cheaper.”

“Of course it’s possible to do a simple makeover on a more ordinary kitchen that still looks really good,” she says.

Replacing a tired benchtop, outdated cupboard and drawer fronts or updating the cupboard and drawer handles for around \$10 each can make a world of difference to the look and feel of your kitchen.

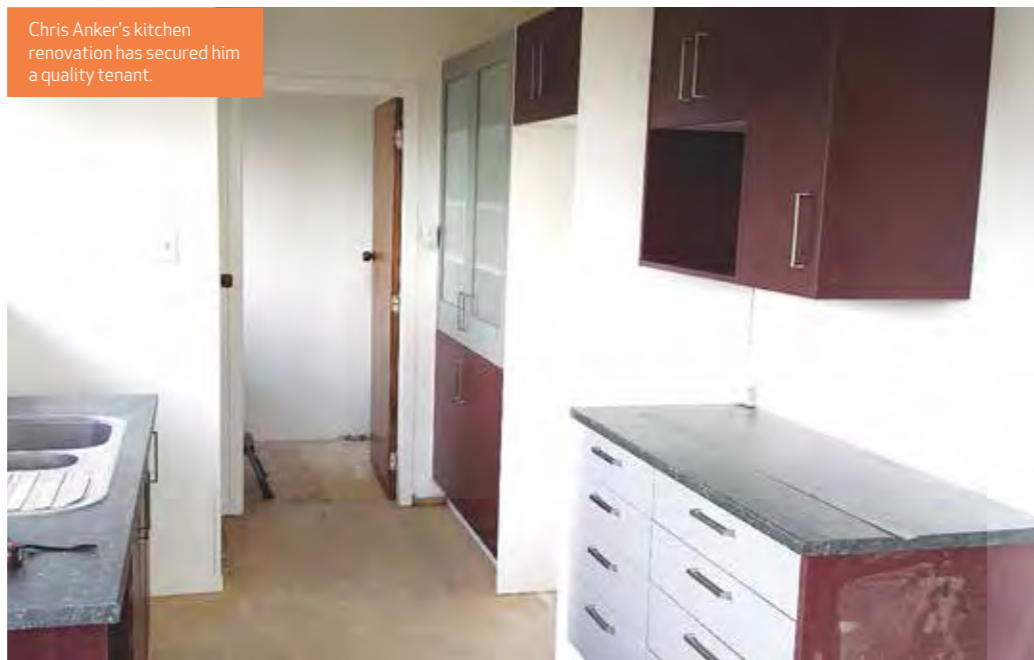
“Drawers are big at the moment so if you can possibly replace several cupboards with a set of drawers the kitchen will instantly look more modern and appealing.”

APPLIANCES

On the appliance front Dryland says some cheaper items can be perfectly adequate but landlords should do some research through www.consumer.org.nz, before rushing to buy.

“It’s also worth noting that big names like Bosch have entry level priced products as well as their high-end ones.”

Chris Anker’s kitchen renovation has secured him a quality tenant.



CONFIGURATION

When looking at layout, the old idea of a work triangle is largely a thing of the past because more than one person may be cooking at the same time.

“It’s good to keep all the cooking appliances, oils, saucepans and other essentials in one zone and the main thing then is easy access to the fridge,” says Dryland.

ENGAGING TRADES

Most tradespeople who work in the kitchen renovation area have their own hints and tips when creating a champagne kitchen on a beer budget.

“But make sure you buy the best quality you can afford and use a builder who is experienced with installing flat-pack kitchens – if you don’t, you may find an incorrectly installed kitchen will start to fall apart a year later,” Dryland says.

Within These Walls builder Keith Lynch offers a complete building and renovation service with plumber/gasfitters and electricians on his team.

“Along with bathrooms, kitchens are the most expensive rooms in the house and you can’t do the services and installation aspects yourself so there’s really no way to save money on that front.

“What I would suggest if a landlord is working to a strict budget is that they do

the demolition side themselves and, later, the painting.”

Lynch says homeowners should do their research because some things that may be seen as cost-saving, such as a tiled splashback instead of a glass one, often ending up costing around the same.

Another advantage of using a professional is they are au fait with the latest rules and regulations for BRANZ and local councils, which can be complicated and confusing to a lay person. Even moving existing plumbing, gas and electrics can involve rules that are just as rigid as those regarding initial installation.

Livewire Electrical sparky Kent Griffin also warns against trying to cut too many corners.

“I have customers who ask if they can supply their own materials and my reply is that I’m happy to install those products but I don’t guarantee them as I do with items I’ve bought from my usual, very reliable, wholesale supplier,” Griffin says.

Regarding appliances, while many renovators are concerned with buying the big names in appliances, cheaper models can often deliver impressive mileage, he says.

“Basically if it’s in a box, with its paperwork, it must have reached the standards required to import it so chances are that it’s a perfectly good appliance.”

FLAT PACK

Hardware chainstores offer standard pre-made units that can be used as-is, or customised to fit into a particular space. Bunnings Warehouse has everything you need to create a well-priced efficiently functioning kitchen. Their Marque complete modular economy kitchen unit sits at around \$1000 – a sink, tapware and stove needs to be added.

At the other end of the scale between \$6,000-\$13,000 will get a progressively larger,

more comprehensive Bunnings kitchen with such optional features as glass front cupboards, high-gloss finishes and splashbacks.

If you’re new to kitchen renovation, experts are on hand to help.

At Elfin Kitchens in Auckland, Mark Nicolson saw a gap in the market as demand for accommodation began to ramp up a decade ago, and he began importing his compact kitchen units from Germany. Prices begin at around \$2,500.

“We’re noticing an emerging trend for small-scale living and the beauty of our kitchens is that if the power and water are there, the units simply ‘plug in’, so no need for tradespeople – DIY savvy landlords can do it themselves,” Nicolson says.

He says there’s a move towards turning space that isn’t needed in a house or apartment into a self-contained studio flat, which can be rented out in order to subsidise the mortgage.

A MINI FACELIFT

If you are a first time investor and funds are limited the good news is joinery and benchtop renovation companies can do wonders in any space – large or small.

Adrian Kay, of Dream Doors, offers a full renovations service, re-facing door fronts, drawer fronts, panels and benchtops.

“We do quite a lot of work on rental properties,” Kay says.

Prices depend on the scope of the job but, typically, replacing the door and drawer fronts in an existing kitchen can cost around \$6,000; if you want to replace bench-tops, splash-backs and other features, you could be looking at \$9,000 or so.

One of the advantages of refacing a kitchen is it doesn’t involve the stress, mess and upheaval of building and installing a complete new kitchen and takes significantly less time to complete.



COLOUR ME NEUTRAL

Dryland tends to recommend neutral tones to her clients and says in rentals she generally advises landlords to keep it simple and classic.

“Tenants could easily be put off by, say, bright orange.”

Bold lighting is also a no-go.

“People want to find their kitchen relaxing,” she says.

A QUALITY TENANT

Landlord Chris Anker still can’t believe how lucky he was when it came to renovating the kitchen in his rental house in Blenheim.

“We were in the process of moving to Auckland and wanted to increase our rental income and get a high-quality tenant who would enjoy living in it long term, so I started looking around at kitchen options.

“I found an existing kitchen which was being sold on a Facebook trading site, because the owners didn’t like the colour. Needless to say, I went off to see it straight away.

“It’s maroon and silver, and I think it looks rather good.”

The kitchen itself was around \$3,000 and the builders charged about \$1,500 to install it. The cost, all-up, was less than \$5,000. Anker found a really good tenant almost immediately.

“She appreciates the kitchen and, better still, she’s a keen gardener!” he says. ■