



The Portland Kitchen Remodel Checklist

Everything Portland homeowners need to plan, budget, and execute a kitchen remodel — without the chaos.

PREPARED BY
PDX Home Revival · Portland, Oregon · 2025

How to Use This Checklist

A kitchen remodel is one of the most impactful investments you can make in your Portland home — and one of the most stressful if you're not prepared. This checklist walks you through every stage, from the first dream session to the final reveal. Check off each step as you go, share it with your contractor, and use it as your single source of truth.

Portland Homeowner Tip: In Portland's market, kitchen remodels typically return 65–80% of their value at resale — and dramatically improve day-to-day quality of life. Budget 10–20% more than your initial estimate for surprises (older Portland homes often hide plumbing or electrical quirks behind the walls).

PHASE 1

Dream & Discovery

- Define your "why"** — Are you remodeling to enjoy daily cooking, boost resale value, accommodate a growing family, or all three? Your goal shapes every decision.
- Collect inspiration** — Save photos to a Pinterest board or Houzz ideabook. Aim for 20–30 images. Patterns will emerge (you'll notice what you keep gravitating toward).
- Identify your non-negotiables** — List 3–5 features you absolutely must have (e.g., a large island, double ovens, cabinet pantry, quartz counters).
- Note what frustrates you most** about your current kitchen — poor storage, bad lighting, no counter space, awkward layout? These are your remodel priorities.
- Decide if you're moving walls** — Structural changes (opening to living room, adding an island) add 20–40% to cost but transform the space. Worth discussing early.
- Consider your timeline** — Are you flexible or do you have a deadline (family gathering, listing the home)? Portland permit timelines can add 2–4 weeks.
- Schedule a free consultation** — Before spending a dollar, talk to a remodel professional. A good consultation validates your vision and surfaces issues early.

PDX Tip: Portland has unique permitting requirements for kitchen remodels involving plumbing, electrical, or structural work. Your contractor should handle this — but ask upfront: "Will you pull and manage all permits?" If they hesitate, that's a red flag.

PHASE 2

Budget & Planning

- Set your realistic budget range** — In Portland (2025), kitchen remodels typically run: Basic refresh \$15K–\$28K · Mid-range full remodel \$28K–\$55K · Luxury/custom \$55K–\$120K+
- Add a 15% contingency buffer** — Hidden costs are the norm in older Portland homes: aging plumbing, knob-and-tube wiring, subfloor damage, or asbestos in pre-1980 homes.
- Understand where budget goes** — Cabinets (30–35%), labor (25–35%), countertops (10–15%), appliances (10–15%), flooring/tile (5–10%), fixtures & lighting (5–10%).
- Explore financing options** — HELOC, home improvement loans, or construction loans. Oregon has several local lenders familiar with renovation financing.
- Decide what you'll keep vs. replace** — Can existing appliances be reused? Are the cabinet boxes solid? Keeping structure saves money.
- Get 2–3 written estimates** — Never accept a verbal quote. Compare scope, materials, timeline, and warranty — not just the bottom line number.

PHASE 3

Design & Material Selection

- Choose your cabinet style** — Shaker, flat-front, inset, or raised panel. Decide finish: painted (timeless), stained wood (warm), or two-tone (modern elegance).
- Select your countertop material** — Quartz (low maintenance, durable), quartzite (natural stone look), marble (premium, requires sealing), butcher block (warm, casual).
- Choose your backsplash** — This is where personality lives. Subway tile is safe; zellige, handmade ceramic, or statement stone adds luxury at relatively low cost.
- Plan your lighting** — Layer it: recessed for general, under-cabinet for task, pendant over island for ambiance. Lighting transforms a kitchen more than almost anything else.
- Select appliances early** — Appliance dimensions drive cabinet layout. Order them early; supply chain delays are common. Confirm delivery window before construction starts.
- Choose your flooring** — LVP (durable, waterproof, realistic), hardwood (warm, can be refinished), or large-format tile (minimal grout lines, stunning). Confirm it extends into adjacent rooms.
- Finalize hardware** — Pulls, knobs, and hinges are jewelry for your kitchen. Brushed brass, matte black, and brushed nickel are the current Portland favorites.
- Review the design drawings** — Your contractor should provide detailed drawings before a single cabinet is ordered. Ask to see elevation views, not just a floor plan.

Design Tip: Choose your countertop slab in person at the stone yard — every slab is unique. Bring a cabinet door sample and flooring chip. What looks good on a screen rarely translates perfectly in person.

PHASE 4

Hiring Your Contractor & Permits

- Verify Oregon CCB license** — Every contractor in Oregon must be licensed with the Construction Contractors Board. Check at oregon.gov/ccb. Non-licensed contractors void your insurance.
- Confirm they carry general liability + workers' comp** — Ask for certificates of insurance. If a worker is injured in your home and they're uninsured, you may be liable.
- Check references & reviews** — Ask for 2–3 recent client references (not just Google reviews). Call them. Ask: Was the timeline met? Was communication good? Any surprises?
- Review the contract carefully** — It should include: scope of work, materials spec, payment schedule, start/end dates, change order process, and warranty terms.
- Understand the payment schedule** — A healthy schedule: 10–20% deposit, milestone payments tied to completion stages, 5–10% holdback at final walkthrough. Never pay 100% upfront.
- Confirm who pulls permits** — In Portland, kitchen remodels involving electrical, plumbing, or structural work require permits. Your contractor should handle all of it — not you.
- Get the permit posted before demo begins** — Oregon law requires the permit card to be visible at the job site. Inspections are scheduled by your contractor at key milestones.
- Set up a temporary kitchen** — Remodels take 6–14 weeks. Set up a microwave, coffee maker, and mini-fridge in another room. Plan for more takeout than usual.

PHASE 5

During Construction

- Establish a communication rhythm** — Weekly check-ins with your project manager. Ask for a daily text update if the crew is on site. Don't wait for surprises.
- Document all change orders in writing** — Any change to scope, materials, or timeline must be signed before work proceeds. Verbal agreements don't hold.
- Do a framing inspection before walls close** — Once drywall goes up, you can't see what's behind it. Walk the space with your contractor before that happens.
- Confirm appliance delivery timing** — Appliances should arrive after flooring and before final cabinet install. Coordinate with your contractor — timing matters.
- Track milestone payments** — Only release payments when the agreed milestone is visibly complete. Keep a spreadsheet of what's been paid and what remains.
- Keep neighbors informed** — Portland neighborhoods are tight-knit. A heads-up about noise and parking goes a long way. Your contractor should provide a construction schedule.

Final Walkthrough & Closeout

- Create a punch list** — Walk every inch before final payment. Write down anything unfinished, damaged, or not as specified. Your contractor should address all items before you release final funds.
- Test everything** — Every drawer, every door, every appliance, every outlet, every light switch, hot and cold water, garbage disposal, dishwasher cycle. All of it.
- Confirm all permits are closed** — Ask for documentation showing final inspection was passed. Unpermitted work can complicate a future home sale.
- Get all warranties in writing** — Cabinet warranty, appliance manuals, countertop care instructions, contractor warranty on labor (typically 1–2 years). Organize in a folder.
- Take final photos for your records** — Before and after, all angles. Useful for insurance, future sale, and pure satisfaction.
- Leave an honest review** — Helps the next homeowner and the contractor who did right by you. Google and Houzz reviews are the most impactful in Portland's market.
- Update your homeowner's insurance** — A new kitchen increases your home's value. Make sure your coverage reflects it.

Red Flags to Watch For

- | | |
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| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No written contract | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Asking for more than 30% upfront |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Can't provide CCB license number | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No permit pulled for electrical/plumbing |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Price significantly below other bids | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reluctant to provide references |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Vague on timeline or "very flexible" | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pressures you to decide immediately |

Ready to Revive Your Kitchen?

We'd love to walk through your space and show you what's possible. Our free consultation is a no-pressure conversation — just ideas, honest numbers, and a clear path forward.

GET IN TOUCH

(503) 410-1009

pdxhomerevival@gmail.com

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