

Lamorinda OUR HOMES

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Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian

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Adventures in home renovation – pitfalls and triumphs of kitchen rehab

By B. B. Kaye



Kent Cremolini carefully reviews plans with Francis Combes of Premiere Kitchens in Lafayette.

Photo Andy Scheck

Kitchens have evolved dramatically over the last 100 years. Your great, great, or even only great grandparents may well have cooked meals in a wood burning fireplace or over a coal-burning stove, after pumping water by hand out in the yard and carrying heavy, sloshing pots back into the house for cooking and washing no matter how cold the time of year.

Nowadays, a kitchen is the most complex room

in a house.

Done well, a kitchen can dramatically increase your quality of life, becoming a sublime center of easy living, a joy in which to entertain family and friends. Done poorly, it can be a miserable affair, inspiring only avoidance or, worse, be an unhealthy and dangerous place.

A truly great kitchen can only be the product of thoughtful planning and communication, where

nothing is left to chance between a homeowner and the craftspeople and designers who are entrusted to create it.

Tom Pollock, a Lafayette resident and home improvement contractor, has been in home renovations for over 30 years, beginning as a union carpenter in Colorado. “Most of the people I work with have already been to an architect to get the big things worked out. I would say to most people who are thinking about doing (a renovation), sit down, think about, and write down what their preferences are. What would they really like, in the design or layout, like where they want the sink, and what size refrigerator. Then they can relay those details to the architect or contractor.

“Even when clients do talk with an architect and they think they have an idea of what is going to happen, they have trouble communicating it to whoever is doing the work,” said Pollock. “They may assume that a feature will be located somewhere, but have not communicated it to anybody. They should communicate all along the job.”

Pollock says architects may have one idea, and so they may do things differently from what the client wants. “Clients should review drawings carefully, and let the architect know if what they are drawing isn’t going to work out,” he said. “It’s much more difficult after the fact. The more planning and thought, and the more you can communicate your preferences, is a good start.”

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