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THE LAST WORDS

What's the most common mistake people make in their kitchen? Here, nine kitchen designers who've seen it all...

Interviews by
SHAX RIEGLER

"Too much uniformity. Cabinets and countertops that look like an assembly of mass-produced boxes and slabs, all the same height and depth. This has more to do with the standards set by the industry than with the actual comfort of the person working in a kitchen. You don't have to follow the masses. Make your countertops thirty inches deep or three inches thick, if that's what feels right for you."

FU-TUNG CHENG, CHENG DESIGN, BERKELEY, CA

"Poor-quality cabinetry. Think about it—you're opening and closing those doors and drawers all the time. Get something strong and good-looking. Hardwoods, a good finish, and strong hinges are essential."

BEVERLY ELLSLEY,
WESTPORT, CT

"Overdoing it! It drives me crazy when a kitchen is over-designed. Knowing when to stop is the real challenge."

CHRISTOPHER PEACOCK,
GREENWICH, CT

"Being boring. The best kitchens have a soul or a spirit that's warm, inviting, and personal. Every project is a chance to do something new and creative. One of my clients had an antique icebox that had been in the family for years. Instead of discarding it, we refinished it and had the hardware replated, which turned out beautifully. It's not just about the cabinets and countertops—the whole room has to sing."

MICK DE GIULIO, DE GIULIO KITCHEN DESIGN, CHICAGO, IL

"Too many stainless appliances. Stainless steel can be a wonderful accent. However, as with all good design, there should be a rhythm with the placement. Splashes of stainless all over the place make any kitchen feel choppy and small. Stainless-steel dishwashers are the worst. They attract your eye to a place you really don't want your eye to go. And be especially careful with those stainless-steel coffins—giant stainless refrigerators. They can quickly overpower a kitchen design if it's not balanced correctly."

MATTHEW QUINN, DESIGN
GALLERIA, ATLANTA, GA

"The notion that bigger is always better. A well-designed kitchen with high-quality materials and thoughtful details can make even the smallest space suit you perfectly."

TISH KEY, SAN FRANCISCO, CA

"No countertop around wall ovens! Where are you going to put the turkey when you take it out of the oven?"

TERRY SCARBOROUGH,
KITCHENS BY DEANE,
NEW CANAAN, CT

"There can be such a thing as too much storage. There's rarely a need to completely fill a room with cabinets. A good layout is a balancing act between storage, function, and aesthetics."

BOB BAKES, BAKES AND COMPANY, SAG HARBOR, NY

"Cabinets that fall short of the ceiling, collecting dust and un-needed accessories."

JOAN SCHINDLER, NEW YORK, NY