

Kitchen cabinets control more of your remodeling budget than almost anything else in the room. In Los Angeles, where labor and rent are high, the numbers can surprise people who are used to national averages. I have had more than one homeowner slide a big box store flyer across the table and ask why their quote is double.

The short answer is that cabinet costs in LA range widely, from a few thousand dollars to well over six figures, depending on whether you refinish existing boxes, reface, or go full custom. The better question is what you are actually paying for, and when it makes sense to spend more.

This guide walks through realistic price ranges for LA, explains what cabinet makers actually do, and helps you decide whether refinishing, refacing, semi custom, or fully custom cabinets are right for your home and budget.

## **What a cabinet maker really does**

People often ask, what is a cabinet maker, and how is that different from a carpenter. A cabinet maker is a specialist. Where a carpenter might frame walls, hang doors, or build decks, a cabinet maker focuses on detailed box construction, doors, drawers, hardware, and fine finishes.

In practice, what does a cabinet maker do on a typical kitchen job in Los Angeles:

They meet you on site, measure carefully, and design the layout. They engineer the boxes and doors, choose appropriate materials, build and finish in a shop, then coordinate delivery and installation. A good cabinet maker thinks through how every drawer will open, how fillers handle out of square walls, where seams in countertops will land relative to cabinets, and how appliances integrate.

Many cabinet makers also install cabinets themselves rather than subbing to a separate installer. In my experience, the best outcomes come when the same company is responsible for both fabrication and installation, because there is no room for finger pointing if something does not fit.

Some cabinet makers also do countertops or at least coordinate them. Others partner with stone fabricators. It is worth asking early whether your cabinet maker will manage countertops and any bathroom vanities as part of the same project.

## **Carpenter vs cabinet maker**

What is the difference between a carpenter and a cabinet maker in practical terms.

If you are adding a non structural pantry, a carpenter can likely frame the opening, add drywall, and even hang premade cabinets. But when you want full overlay frameless cabinets with tight reveals, integrated lighting, appliance panels, and a flawless paint finish, you are now in cabinet maker territory.

A carpenter is usually more of a generalist. They might set doors one day and install laminate flooring the next. A cabinet maker spends their days aligning hinges to a millimeter, building drawer boxes, and dialing in spray finishes. In Los Angeles, many remodels involve both trades. The carpenter prepares the space, fixes framing, and adjusts utilities. The cabinet maker builds and installs the boxes that will live there for decades.

If your goal is the lowest possible cost and you are comfortable with standard stock cabinets, a good carpenter plus ready made boxes from a big retailer can be a smart move. If you want a custom color, unusual dimensions, or the most efficient use of every inch, a dedicated cabinet shop is usually worth the premium.

## **The main ways to remodel kitchen cabinets in Los Angeles**

When clients ask how much it costs to remodel kitchen cabinets in Los Angeles, I always start [Kitchen Remodeling Services In Los Angeles](#) by clarifying what “remodel” means to them. There are four main paths, with very different budgets.

## 1. Refinishing existing cabinets

Refinishing keeps your existing cabinet boxes and doors. A finisher cleans, sands, repairs minor damage, and sprays a new paint or clear coat.

In Los Angeles, professional cabinet refinishing for a typical 10 by 12 or 12 by 15 kitchen usually falls between 3,000 and 8,000 dollars, depending on:

- The number of doors and drawers
- Whether you choose paint or stain
- How much prep is needed to fix damage or grease build up
- Whether you add new hardware and soft close hinges

Is it cheaper to refinish or replace kitchen cabinets. Almost always, refinishing is cheaper, especially if the existing boxes are solid wood or plywood and structurally sound. The downside is that your layout does not change, and you still live with any fundamental design flaws like inadequate storage or poor appliance placement.

## 2. Refacing cabinets

Cabinet refacing replaces your doors and drawer fronts, covers exposed frames with matching veneer, and usually upgrades hinges and drawer glides. The existing boxes stay in place.

In Los Angeles, cabinet refacing commonly ranges from about 8,000 to 20,000 dollars for a mid sized kitchen. High end veneers, inset doors, or specialty finishes can push it higher. So is cabinet refacing worth it. It can be, if:

You like your layout. The existing cabinet boxes are in good shape. You want a fresh style and color without the downtime and cost of full replacement.

If your boxes are cheap particleboard that have swollen or failed near the sink or dishwasher, refacing is often throwing good money after bad.

## 3. Replacing with stock or semi custom cabinets

Stock cabinets are built in standard sizes and finishes. Semi custom cabinets start from stock sizes but allow more flexibility in widths, finishes, and some details.

In the LA area, decent quality stock cabinets, fully installed with basic hardware but without countertops, typically fall in the 10,000 to 25,000 dollar range for a normal sized kitchen. That range depends heavily on:

Room size and number of cabinets

Whether the cabinets are framed or frameless Door style and finish How much modification or filler work is needed for a good fit

Semi custom cabinets can easily run from 20,000 to 45,000 dollars in Los Angeles, sometimes more in larger homes or for higher end lines. The big benefit is flexibility. Semi custom allows better use of space, more finish options, and upgraded drawer boxes and hardware.

What is the difference between custom and semi custom cabinets in practice. Semi custom still works inside a catalog system, with increments like one and a half or three inches for widths and fixed heights and depths. True

custom cabinets are built to the millimeter for your space.

## 4. Fully custom cabinets

Custom cabinets are built from scratch for your kitchen. There is no underlying catalog. This is where a true cabinet maker shines.

How much do custom kitchen cabinets cost in Los Angeles. For full custom work in LA, a realistic installed range, without countertops, is often:

15,000 to 25,000 dollars for a small condo kitchen

25,000 to 50,000 dollars for an average single family home 50,000 to 120,000 dollars or more for large or luxury kitchens

The range is wide because the details matter. Inset doors, integrated lighting, specialized organizers, appliance panels, and specialty finishes can double the cost compared to a simple shaker door with a durable paint.

Homeowners often ask, how much should I pay for custom cabinets and how much does a custom cabinet maker cost on a per foot basis. In Los Angeles, it is common to see pricing in the 900 to 1,600 dollar per linear foot range installed for solid custom work using quality plywood, hardwood faces, and good hardware. Ultra high end projects with exotic woods or hand finishing can go higher.

## Why custom cabinets cost what they do

People reasonably ask why are custom cabinets so expensive and whether custom cabinets are worth the money.

You are paying for several things that are mostly invisible when you look at the finished kitchen:

Labor in a high cost city. Skilled finish carpenters and spray finishers in LA earn far more than national averages. A single kitchen can represent several hundred labor hours between design, shop work, finishing, and installation.

Materials. Plywood has doubled and tripled in cost at various points in recent years. Good quality plywood, durable paints, and European hardware are not cheap, especially when bought in smaller quantities.

Overhead. Cabinet shops need space for saws, edge banders, spray booths, and storage. Industrial space in Los Angeles is expensive. That rent finds its way into the price.

Precision and waste. Custom cabinets are built to fit imperfect walls and specific appliances. That means more measuring, more custom parts, and often more waste as offcuts cannot always be reused.

Are custom cabinets better than stock cabinets. Not automatically, but they can be. Well built custom cabinets use thicker plywood, stronger joinery, and better hardware than many stock lines. They can also be designed around how you cook, store, and entertain. For unusual spaces, older homes with out of plumb walls, or homeowners who plan to stay long term, custom cabinets often are a good investment.

For those reselling within a few years, stock or semi custom may offer a better return on investment, especially in mid market neighborhoods.

## Materials: plywood, MDF, and the best woods for custom cabinets

A big part of cabinet cost comes from material choices. Clients ask what material is best for kitchen cabinets, what is the best wood for custom cabinets, and whether plywood cabinets are better than MDF.

For boxes, most high quality custom shops in Los Angeles use furniture grade plywood. Are plywood cabinets better than MDF. For cabinet boxes, usually yes. Plywood handles moisture better, holds screws more securely, and resists sagging. It also costs more. A good rule of thumb for custom boxes is cabinet sides around three quarter inch thick plywood, with backs at half or five eighths inch, and shelves at three quarter inch, especially for spans over two feet. That answers the common question of how thick custom cabinet wood should be.

MDF, medium density fiberboard, has its place. It is ideal for painted doors and panels, because it stays smooth and resists warping. For a painted shaker kitchen, many LA cabinet makers will build plywood boxes with MDF doors. Done right, this combination performs very well.

For door and face frame woods on stained cabinets, maple, cherry, walnut, and white oak are the usual players. What is the best wood for custom cabinets depends on your goals.

Maple is hard, smooth, and takes paint or clear finishes well. White oak is currently very popular in Los Angeles, especially in rift or quarter sawn cuts that show tight linear grain. Walnut creates a softer, richer look and shows fingerprints less than high gloss paints.

Exotic woods, hand matched veneers, or specialty wire brushed finishes live in the category of the most expensive kitchen cabinets, both for material and finishing labor.

## **Framed vs frameless cabinets**

Are framed or frameless cabinets better. In the LA market, frameless (also called European style) is extremely common. Frameless cabinets use thicker box material and omit the face frame. Doors attach directly to the sides, which creates a cleaner, more modern look and gives slightly more interior space.

Framed cabinets, standard in many traditional American homes, include a face frame attached to the box. They can be more forgiving to install in older, uneven houses and work beautifully with inset doors.

Neither is strictly better. Frameless is usually better for contemporary or transitional styles and can cost slightly more due to thicker material and more precise construction. Framed works well for classic styles or when matching existing traditional millwork.

## **Styles, colors, and resale value**

What is the most popular kitchen cabinet style in Los Angeles right now. For the last decade, simple shaker doors have dominated, often paired with slab drawer fronts. We are starting to see more slim shaker profiles and some ribbed or fluted panel details in higher end homes.

Are white cabinets going out of style. Pure bright white everywhere is cooling a bit, but white still sells. The difference is that designers now soften it with warmer whites, light greige tones, and natural wood accents. For resale, the best cabinet color is usually a safe neutral: warm white uppers with light wood or soft gray lowers is a common strategy in LA flips.

What is the best cabinet color for resale value. In middle and upper middle price points, buyers respond well to light, airy kitchens without extreme color choices. Deep blues and greens can work, but they should be paired with timeless counters and backsplashes. Custom colors that feel too personalized can hurt resale in more conservative neighborhoods, but in trendier parts of LA, a bold color can even help if the design is cohesive.

## **Process and timeline for custom cabinets**

People often underestimate how long it takes to make custom cabinets and how long a custom kitchen takes to install.

For a typical Los Angeles cabinet shop, the process of making custom cabinets for a mid sized kitchen usually looks like this:

Design and approvals. One to four weeks, depending on how quickly you make decisions and how complex the layout is.

Shop drawings and ordering materials. One to two weeks.

Fabrication and finishing. Four to eight weeks in many LA shops, longer in busy seasons or for very complex jobs.

Delivery and installation. Three to ten working days for most kitchens, including scribing fillers, aligning doors and drawers, and fitting panels.

So from deposit to fully installed cabinets, it is normal for the process to take eight to twelve weeks, sometimes longer. The actual installation days on site are much shorter, but lead time catches people off guard.

Can custom cabinets be modified after installation. Small adjustments, such as adding rollout trays or adjusting shelves, are usually easy. Changing door styles, altering layout, or significantly resizing boxes after install becomes expensive quickly. That is why detailed design and careful measurement up front matter so much.

## **Do you need a permit for kitchen cabinets in Los Angeles**

Do you need a permit for kitchen cabinets in Los Angeles. If you are just replacing or refacing cabinets in the exact same layout, with no changes to plumbing, gas, electrical, or walls, it is often considered like for like replacement, and many people proceed without a permit.

However, the moment you move appliances, add new outlets, open or close walls, or relocate plumbing, you are in permitted remodel territory. In reality, most serious kitchen remodels in Los Angeles end up requiring permits because they involve electrical and plumbing work. City inspectors do not usually care about the cabinet boxes themselves, but they absolutely care about wiring, circuits, and safety.

Talk to your contractor or designer about your specific scope. Skipping required permits can create problems during resale or if there is an insurance claim.

## **Cost breakdown: what you actually pay for**

When homeowners look at a cabinet proposal, it can be hard to tell where the money is going. A useful way to think about it is by category, size, material, finish, and configuration.

For a mid sized LA kitchen with full replacement, a rough pattern I often see looks like this:

1) Stock or budget semi custom, basic hardware, simple shaker doors, installed without counters: around 10,000 to 18,000 dollars.

2) Better semi custom with plywood boxes, soft close hardware, multiple finish options: around 20,000 to 35,000 dollars. 3) Quality custom shop with plywood boxes, hardwood or MDF doors, good European hardware: roughly 25,000 to 60,000 dollars. 4) Luxury custom with inset doors, exotic veneers, heavy organizers, and specialty finishes: 60,000 to well over 100,000 dollars.

Those are typical totals, not hard rules, and they exclude countertops, appliances, and tile. Neighborhood expectations matter. In a modest condo in North Hollywood, spending 80,000 solely on cabinets rarely makes

financial sense. In a high end Brentwood or Pacific Palisades home, underinvesting in cabinets can hurt eventual resale.

## **Are custom cabinets a good investment**

From a value perspective, homeowners want to know whether custom cabinets add value to a home and whether custom cabinets are worth the money. Well executed cabinets that fit a home's price point almost always help both your daily life and your sale price.

What is the average lifespan of custom cabinets. With good materials and a durable finish, custom cabinets easily last 20 to 30 years, and I have seen solid wood and plywood kitchens still working fine at 40 years, even if the style looks dated. Hardware usually fails before the boxes. Replacing glides and hinges after 15 or 20 years is far cheaper than replacing cabinets.

Do custom cabinets add value to a home. Appraisers do not line item cabinets, but buyers absolutely feel the difference between flimsy boxes and solid drawers with smooth slides and soft close. A kitchen with high quality cabinets, even if not flashy, often sells faster and for more than a similar home with dated or cheap cabinetry.

Are custom cabinets a good investment. They are when three conditions line up. First, you plan to stay long enough to enjoy daily use. Second, the spend fits your neighborhood. Third, the design and workmanship are high quality. Spending 40,000 on poorly designed custom cabinets is worse than spending 20,000 on a well chosen semi custom line.

## **Cheapest ways to get a "custom" look**

Many people like the idea of custom but have a strict budget. What is the cheapest way to get custom cabinets or something close.

Working within stock or semi custom lines but designing carefully can go a long way. A good designer can stretch a semi custom catalog with clever use of fillers, panels, and trim. Combining stock cabinets with a custom island or a custom hood, or adding a few bespoke pieces like a built in banquette, often gives you 80 percent of the custom feel for far less than full custom.

Is it cheaper to buy cabinets or have them made. In general, buying mass produced stock cabinets from a big manufacturer is cheaper than having a small shop make them. There are exceptions when you need unusual sizes that would require many fillers and hacks from a stock line. In those cases, a local cabinet maker can sometimes be competitive, but typically custom costs more upfront.

Some custom cabinet makers offer financing, either through in house programs or partnerships with third party lenders. This can smooth cash flow, but read the terms carefully. Interest or fees may increase your effective cabinet cost significantly.

## **How much markup is normal on custom cabinets**

What is the markup on custom cabinets is a question people rarely ask directly, but they often wonder.

For local cabinet shops, the price you see already includes their overhead and profit. On projects where a general contractor buys cabinets from a shop then resells them to you, a markup of 10 to 25 percent on the cabinet package is common. That markup covers coordination, scheduling, risk, and warranty management.

Markups feel painful, but eliminating them often means you take on the responsibilities of ordering, inspecting deliveries, handling damage claims, and coordinating install. For some owners, that trade off is worth it. For others, paying a fair markup to have a professional manage headaches is money well spent.

## **How to find a good cabinet maker in Los Angeles**

The biggest factor in how your cabinets turn out is not the catalog you pick from. It is the person and shop building and installing them.

So how do you know if a cabinet maker is good and how do you find a good cabinet maker in such a large city.

Referrals from contractors, designers, or friends who have recently done similar projects are a strong starting point. When you meet a cabinet maker, ask to see physical samples of their work. Pay attention to how doors align, how drawers glide, how finishes feel to the touch, and how neatly interiors are done. Ask where their cabinets are made and finished, and whether they install with in house crews.

When you evaluate what to look for in a cabinet maker, focus on communication, transparency, and craftsmanship. A reputable shop clearly explains materials, construction details, and finish systems, and they give realistic timelines. They do not promise miracles at half the going rate.

Here are practical questions you can ask a cabinet maker before signing:

- 1) What box material do you use as standard, and how thick are the sides, backs, and shelves.
- 2) Are your drawer boxes solid wood, plywood, or particleboard, and what hardware do you use.
- 3) Where are the cabinets built and finished, and what finish system do you use for kitchens specifically.
- 4) Who installs the cabinets, and what happens if something does not fit or gets damaged during install.
- 5) Can I see at least two recent projects in person or detailed photos, including interiors and close ups.

You will learn a lot from how clearly and comfortably they answer. Trust your instincts. If a shop is vague about details or dismissive of your questions, look elsewhere.

## **Measurement, installation, and coordination**

Accurate measurement is the backbone of any cabinet job. How do you measure for custom cabinets as a homeowner. For early budgeting, you can roughly measure the run lengths of walls and islands and count how many upper and lower cabinets you have. That helps cabinet makers provide a preliminary ballpark.

For final production, the cabinet maker should do detailed site measurements themselves, especially after rough framing, plumbing, and electrical are complete. Appliances should be selected before final cabinet drawings, because every fridge, range, and dishwasher has specific clearance requirements.

How long does a custom kitchen take to install. For a typical LA kitchen with custom cabinets already built and delivered, installation often takes three to seven days, not including countertops. Larger or more complex spaces can stretch longer. Do cabinet makers install cabinets. Many do, and I strongly prefer when they do. If installation is done by a third party, make sure responsibilities for fit and finish are crystal clear in your contract.

## **Refinishing, refacing, replacing: deciding what is right for you**

Is cabinet refacing worth it, or should you refinish or fully replace. Here is how I usually frame the decision.

Refinish when your existing cabinets are structurally solid, you are happy with the layout, and your budget is tight but you want a fresh look. It is the least expensive cabinet related option with the fastest turnaround, often under two weeks on site.

Reface when your boxes are decent but your doors are dated or low quality, and you want a style change without the dust and downtime of full demo. Refacing lands solidly in the middle cost tier.

Replace with stock, semi custom, or custom when your layout needs work, your boxes are failing, or you plan a major remodel that moves appliances, walls, or windows. In that case, investing in better designed cabinets usually pays off in daily function and future resale.

Remember that countertops, appliances, flooring, and trades can double or triple your overall kitchen budget beyond the cabinet numbers discussed above. Cabinets are usually 25 to 40 percent of a full kitchen remodel budget in Los Angeles.

## **Choosing finishes that last**

What is the best finish for kitchen cabinets is another common question. For painted cabinets, a high quality catalyzed conversion varnish or a professional grade 2K polyurethane sprayed in a controlled environment is my preferred system. These finishes cure harder than typical trim paint and handle LA's sunlight, oil, and daily wear better.

For stained wood, the key is a finish that resists water and household chemicals. Avoid site brushed lacquer or basic polyurethane over stain for heavily used kitchen cabinets. Professional spray finishes cost more upfront but hold up better, especially around sinks and dishwashers.

Whatever you choose, ask your cabinet maker for care instructions. Mild soap, water, and soft cloths extend finish life far better than harsh cleaners.

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## Putting it together

Remodeling kitchen cabinets in Los Angeles can mean anything from a 3,000 dollar refinishing project to a 100,000 dollar custom build for a luxury home. The right choice depends on your existing cabinets, your budget, how long you plan to stay, and the expectations of your neighborhood.

Stock and semi custom cabinets handle most projects well and keep costs in check. Custom cabinets come into their own when your space is challenging, your design is specific, or you value craftsmanship that will outlast trends.

Whatever route you choose, spend time finding a cabinet maker or supplier you trust, understand the materials going into your home, and make decisions that fit both your lifestyle and your local market. That combination does more for your long term satisfaction and resale than any single door style or color ever will.

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