

In A “Stay-Put Economy,” Homeowners Turn To Budget-Friendly Kitchen Makeovers

(NAPSA)—It’s been called The Stay-Put Economy. And if you’re still living in a house you’d hoped to sell by now, you probably know why.

Too many potential buyers are waiting to see if home prices have further to fall. And too many homeowners who may actually have gotten some bites—more like lowball nibbles, really—are locked into mortgages that would require taking so big a loss on a sale that their heads hurt just thinking about it.

“Recessions have a way of freezing things,” The Atlantic magazine recently wrote.

And so, like you, they stay put. And ask themselves, *Now what?*

Well, the realistic approach, experts say, is to accept that this new reality is likely to last for the foreseeable future, and concentrate on making your current home more comfortable. Attic conversions are big in some circles. But unless you’ve got a relative camping out on the living room sofa till the job market turns, you might want to stick with the one room—the kitchen—that’s the hub of most homes’ activity and needn’t cost a fortune to spruce up.

Read on for some budget-friendly makeover ideas:

• **Floor and Backsplash Tiles.** Consumer Reports says kitchen remodeling today “is all about what you need, rather than some over-the-top designer’s checklist.” In other words, “out”: imported hand-painted ceramic; “in”: porcelain, glass, metal and glaze. A Handy Tip: For a fresh and unique look, use different-sized tiles laid out in elegant patterns.

• **Cabinets.** Entire budgets have been eaten up on just the cost of high-end cabinet replacements alone. Of the other two alternatives—refacing and refinishing—the latter (which also includes repainting) is the most economical. According to DoItYourself.com, all wood and plywood cabinets can be repainted, whereas metal, laminate or melamine pose more of a challenge. A Handy Tip: Use a spray-on finish for the most uniform coverage.



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• **Appliances.** If you’ve long coveted a sleek gourmet kitchen but the cost made you wince as much as you did when you heard Meryl Streep’s voice in that Julia Child movie, you’re in luck: The luxury brand Dacor® has come out with a new “Distinctive™ Series” line of appliances, including a range, dishwasher, cooktops and wall ovens that provides an upscale look and quality for less than other high-end models (www.dacor.com). And since the kitchen is responsible for nearly half of a home’s energy consumption, here’s one place you can (truthfully) tell yourself that upgrading saves money over time, since new appliances tend to be much more energy efficient. A Handy Tip: The exclusive Pure Convection system on the Distinctive Wall Ovens features a triple-mesh filter that allows you to cook multiple items at the same time without worrying about flavors transferring from one dish to another—thus making for faster meal preparation.

One last thing to remember: If and when you do finally sell your home, the return on investment from kitchen remodeling can be as high as 72.1 percent, depending on the work that was completed. *Now do you feel better?*