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AND THE REVIVAL

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ABOVE: In a kitchen by David Heide Design Studio, fully built-in cabinets run to the ceiling to join a soffit for a fine finish. The new kitchen, added to a 1904 Foursquare, offers modern function, but follows historic precedent in scale, materials, and details such as those on the island. RIGHT: Detail of a Prairie-inspired cabinet by Crown Point Cabinetry, with leaded glass and period hardware.



# CABINETS *period* & REVIVAL

Spec'ing new cabinets for your kitchen renovation?

Several different approaches date to the first third of the 20th century. Here's design advice from architects and cabinetmakers. **BY BRIAN D. COLEMAN**

**W**HAT DETAILS make kitchen cabinets "Arts & Crafts style"? We know a revival kitchen when we see one: natural hardwoods with furniture-quality details and artisan-made hardware. Cabinets of the period were generally simpler, though, often constructed of paint-grade wood. You may choose to specify cabinet designs taken from plain bungalow-era rooms, or from somewhat fancier kitchens in Prairie School or Greene & Greene houses. Or you may prefer the beautifully interpreted cabinets of today's revival.

Here are design tidbits and advice from our favorite designers and cabinetmakers.

**BUNGALOW BASIC** Bungalows and Craftsman-style houses of the first two decades of the 20th century generally had very simple kitchens. Although the housewife now entered the kitchen (it was no longer solely the domain of servants), the room was still utilitarian and never used for entertaining. Think "sanitary" and "practical" (what we might call "institutional" nowadays). There may have been a built-in pantry cabinet, but no runs of base and wall cabinets. Food prep typically was done on a central worktable; kitchenware

and bulk items were stored in a free-standing Hoosier or hutch.

Cabinets were plain, made of whatever wood was the cheapest: heart pine in the South, birch in the Midwest, Douglas fir on the West Coast, oak or softwood in the Northeast. The cabinets were painted (in an off-white enamel) or clear-finished over shellac. Doors were face-framed and drawers inset or overlaid about  $\frac{3}{8}$ ". These early cabinets were usually shallower than today's typical 24" base cabinet (and 12" upper cabinet). Wall-hung cabinets often went to the ceiling. Base cabinets went flush to the floor; toe kicks came a decade or two later. Hardware was functional; look for spring-loaded cupboard latches, half moon-shaped bin pulls, and plain nickel-plated or glass knobs.

**ENTERING THE 1920s** World War I dramatically altered American society; the middle class no longer relied on servants, and the family spent more time in the kitchen. Cabinets were built in as an integral part of the room's layout, sometimes with runs of continuous cabinets along one or two walls with a freestanding work station in between. You can embrace color in your later bungalow or Tudor Revival kitchen. As the Jazz Age shimmered across the country, color came



RIGHT: Not all revival kitchens are done in natural-finish hardwoods. This is a new interpretation of the "sanitary" kitchen of the 1920s finished with Benjamin Moore HC-36 Ivory. Note the "Prairie feet" and the vented undersink door with decorative cutouts. David Heide Design Studio renovation.

## arts & crafts cabinets

Almost every kitchen-cabinet company now has an Arts & Crafts or "Mission" line. The following companies use authentic wood species, joinery, and details. Many of them have informative websites.

■ **AMHERST WOODWORKING**  
amherstwoodworking.com

■ **THE CABINETMAKER, INC. (DALE BARNARD)**  
the-cabinetmaker.com

■ **BLACK COVE CABINETRY**  
blackcove.com

■ **BRITISH TRADITIONS**  
britishtraditions.com

■ **COOK & COOK CUSTOM CABINETRY**  
cookandcookcabinetry.com

■ **COUNTRY ROAD ASSOCIATES LTD.**  
countryroadassociates.com

■ **CROWN POINT CABINETRY**  
crown-point.com

■ **FIELDSTONE CABINETRY**  
fieldstonecabinetry.com

■ **JAEGER & ERNST, INC.**  
jaegerandernst.com

■ **JOLIET CABINET COMPANY**  
jolietcabinet.com

■ **THE KENNEBEC COMPANY**  
kennebeccompany.com

■ **NR HILLER DESIGN**  
nrhillerdesign.com

■ **OSBORNE CABINETS & MILLWORK**  
osbornecabinets.com

■ **PLAIN & FANCY CUSTOM CABINETRY**  
plainfancycabinetry.com

■ **VERMONT CUSTOM CABINETRY**  
vermontcabinetry.com

■ **YESTERTEC DESIGN COMPANY**  
yestertec.com



in for the walls, in wallpaper patterns, in flooring, and in dishware. Even the cabinets were painted in color: pastels like pink and yellow, light gray, and the popular jadeite green.

Construction was still basic. Doors were typically inset and drawers inset or finished with half-overlay fronts, the edges finished with just a plain bevel or quarter-round molding. Hardware was mostly nickel plated, with simple ball-tip butt hinges mortised into the door stile and cabinet frame, or butterfly hinges for half-overlay doors. Bin pulls remained popular, and cabinets often had latches instead of knobs. Cabinet-maker Nancy Hiller says placement is critical: never put knobs near the top or bottom of a door, as it's a dead giveaway of a modern redo. Knobs on upper doors were usually two-thirds of the way down the door, while base cabinet doors typically had knobs two-thirds of the way up from the bottom. Hiller advises taking cues from existing cabinets in your house or a neighbor's. You also can copy molding and hardware details

from your dining-room sideboard or a built-in bookcase; just go simpler, not fancier, for the kitchen.

**CALIFORNIA ELEGANCE** Woodworking details from public rooms were adapted and carried into the kitchens of Greene & Greene-designed homes. Design was inspired by Chinese and Japanese woodwork details, including "cloud lifts," seen as a hump or rising portion in the center of a door rail or valance, often with a parallel rising or lowering line below. Cabinet edges were soft and rounded, accented with square ebony or stained pegs. Several kitchen-cabinet companies offer Greene & Greene-inspired cabinets today, as do custom woodworkers. Mahogany is often the wood of choice.

**PRAIRIE RECTILINEAR** Prairie-style cabinets emphasize geometry, with linear and repetitive lines, both vertical and horizontal. Look for square edges, flat panel doors, and exposed joinery with through tenons and pegs.

LEFT, TOP TO BOTTOM: Very simple cabinets look pleasingly old-fashioned accompanied by earthy tile countertops and William Morris-designed 'Fruit' wallpaper, all done in the same palette. Pegged doors and under-counter brackets are honest embellishments in new cherry cabinets by Crown Point Cabinetry. Cabinets with bold wood pulls are a handsome interpretation of period designs in a new kitchen in Vermont; design by architect Dave Sellers.



ABOVE, FROM LEFT: Cutout designs and crossed corners are Prairie-influenced elements in a kitchen with red birch cabinets, in an addition by David Heide to his own 1922 Prairie Style house. Mortise-and-tenon joinery, Eastlake bin pulls, and frosted pattern glass are Victorian-era holdovers in these cabinets from The Kennebec Company, suitable for many turn-of-the-century homes. Craftsman-style doors and divided window glass evoke furniture details in a kitchen from Black Cove Cabinetry.

BOTTOM: A spectacular revival kitchen by The Kennebec Company features oak cabinets with Craftsman furniture pulls, in context with dining room-quality lighting and finishes.

Doors were fully inset, sometimes with stained or marbled glass panels or cantilevered or stepped detailing. Drawers commonly had full inset fronts; a typical detail is a V groove where the boards in a panel are glued together. Oiled bronze, hand-hammered hardware with ball-tipped butt hinges adds to the finished effect. The wood species used was often quarter-sawn white oak, sometimes red oak.

**REVIVAL STYLE** Arts & Crafts revival kitchens combine higher-end materials and furniture-quality period details with modern convenience. Kitchen designer

Karla Pearlstein advises her clients to incorporate a salvaged cabinet or hutch in the kitchen's design to lend period flavor. You're also free to use plain, painted cabinets—very much of the period—and splurge on say, an inlaid linoleum floor, reproduction lighting, or maybe a restored stove. ■

THANKS TO architect **David Heide** [dhdstudio.com](http://dhdstudio.com); consultant **Karla Pearlstein** [restoringhistory.com](http://restoringhistory.com); cabinetmakers **Nancy Hiller** and **Dale Barnard**; to **Crown Point Cabinetry** and **The Kennebec Company**; and to contractor/writer **Jane Powell**.

## secrets of STAIN

Expert woodworker and instructor Dale Barnard likes to use aniline dye to enhance the wood grain; common pigment stains can be muddy. He advises using a top-grade lacquer or varnish to add protection in kitchens. A glazing stain also will enhance the color by opening the pores and adding depth and patina. All that's needed is a cleaning once or twice a year with a non-abrasive oil soap, then paste wax. Barnard recommends W.D. Lockwood water-based powder stains ([wdlockwood.com](http://wdlockwood.com)), Chemcraft 'Danspeed' post-catalyzed lacquer ([chemcraft.com](http://chemcraft.com)) or Kwick-Kleen nitrocellulose lacquer ([kwickkleen.com](http://kwickkleen.com)), and H.F. Staples dark brown paste wax ([hfstaples.com](http://hfstaples.com)).

## KNOWING KNOBS

Knobs are a small but significant detail in a period-inspired kitchen. Avoid shiny, lacquered finishes and brightly colored pulls that look out of place on an Arts & Crafts cabinet. Stick with simple, period-style hardware: unembellished nickel for Craftsman and bungalow cabinets, antiqued or unlacquered brass or polished bronze for revival cabinetry. Glass knobs (clear or green, hexagonal or round) look good on painted cabinets. Greene & Greene cabinets had hand-carved wood pulls and square or pyramid shaped knobs in wood or metal.

