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TURN OFF THAT '70S SHOW

TECHNIQUES UPDATE AGING 'FLOOD KITCHENS'

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As most local people know, 1972 was a difficult year for homeowners and Wyoming Valley residents in general. Once flood waters receded and people moved back into their homes or found new places to live, they ultimately were left with having to redecorate, among other new duties.

What little was available in terms of cabinets and other fixtures captured the spirit of the moment, in this case, the architecturally blah '70s. As homeowners moved on with their lives, wood paneling went up in living rooms and bathrooms, and for many kitchens, it was an equally sad tale.

"After the flood, whatever you got, you got," says Mike Peterlin, who runs a refinishing and wallpaper-hanging business, out of his Nanticoke home. "You'd pretty much take whatever." In many cases **that** meant homeowners had to create kitchen schemes around cabinet colors such as avocado green and harvest gold.

While those colors were wildly popular in the '70s, they don't stack up to the wants and desires of today's homeowners who, for example, are looking to match stained cherry cabinets with stainless-steel appliances and recessed lighting.

Many homeowners want more natural colors in their kitchens, says Peterlin, who along with his son, Steve, refinishes a dozen or so kitchens each year. And these days, the Peterlins are beginning to see an influx in inquiries from people looking to redo "flood kitchens."

Certainly paneled walls can be quickly and easily updated with a few coats of paint. But it's a different story when it comes to redoing kitchen cabinets, especially when cabinets are designed to last for a few decades.

If you're a homeowner looking to revamp an aging kitchen, you have several options spanning a wide price range. Three main options, however, emerge: resurfacing, refinishing or ripping everything out completely.

As for refinishing, "it's so much cheaper," says Frank Taylor, who owns Frank Taylor Repair & Refinishing of Dallas. "It's unbelievable."

Resurfacing costs about \$5,000, while refinishing might go for about half the price, or even much less, depending on whom you ask. The most expensive option of the three would be installing a new kitchen, which can command more than \$20,000 (including new appliances) - or the price of a midsize car, according to multiple online decorating and remodeling sites.

Depending on the style and design of the cabinets, Taylor guesses refinishing a kitchen with 20 doors and drawers might cost about \$700.

“The doors and drawers are what take the beating,” says Taylor, who mainly works on antiques in addition to taking on commercial jobs.

Meanwhile, another refinisher, Robert Rogers of Rogers Refinishing of Sugar Notch, says refinishing an average-size kitchen could cost \$3,000 - an estimate closer to the price of resurfacing.

But there's a major difference when it comes to refinishing and resurfacing.

Resurfacing involves having a plastic veneer placed over the front of an existing cabinet while leaving the remainder of the cabinet intact. **That's** unlike refinishing, which deals with stripping, sanding and staining a cabinet's original wood to the homeowner's desired color.

One area couple to take the kitchen-makeover plunge are Paul Zavislak and his wife, Paulette, who redid theirs a year ago.

Zavislak says he and his wife didn't want to go through the major expense of ripping out the kitchen. Plus they wanted to save the original cabinets of the home, which once belonged to Zavislak's parents. So they turned to the Peterlins for help.

“We wanted to keep the actual real wood, and we were fortunate the cabinetry was still good,” Zavislak says.

So the couple decided to have the cabinets stripped and stained from white and gold provincial to a light cherry.

“It was an easier transition,” Zavislak says of refinishing. “It was quicker. It worked out to be very reasonable in cost.”

The couple went a step further and upgraded the decades-old kitchen's look by changing the flooring and cabinet hardware in addition to adding new appliances and lighting and painting the walls.

The lesson? If you're a homeowner on a tight budget or looking to save old-fashioned cabinets, the best option would be refinishing your cabinets. To determine if **that's** possible, though, you'll need to examine the condition of your cabinets. Look for any nicks, dents, cracks or chips in the wood.

In addition, you should determine if your cabinets are made from a solid wood such as cherry, oak or birch or if they are simply made from particle board or pressed wood. Doing so will speed along the process. If it's a solid wood, then you can proceed with refinishing, which uses your existing cabinets.

If it's a good wood, “it would be a sin to throw it out,” says Peterlin, who thinks refinishing can make cabinets look good again for 15 or 20 years.

Although the process might appear simple, Taylor says do-it-yourselfers really need to understand how to strip and stain furniture, especially when it comes to mixing and applying colors. After all, if a professional is called in to fix a boo-boo, it might end up being a more costly makeover.

“The homeowner can do it, but a kitchen's a huge job,” says Rogers, who has received inquiries from homeowners looking to redo 25-year-old kitchens.

When it comes to selecting a stain, the possibilities are endless. Since 1986, Peterlin has completed kitchens with stained white cabinets and one with stained jet-black cabinets.

As for the most recent color craze - white cabinets - he says **that** choice has pretty much run its course. Now he's noticing more people are seeking out colors such as cherry and fruitwood (a reddish tan).

However, cabinets can be stained any color a homeowner wants, says Peterlin, who has even stained cabinets green.

“If it's on a paint chart, it can be made today,” he says. “They make stains in any color. It's possible to have plum or a bright red kitchen or a bright yellow kitchen - any color you can imagine.”

If you're happy with the current state of your cabinets, there are other ways to update the look without doing one of three Rs (refinishing, resurfacing or ripping out). Consider changing the molding. A contrasting finish or molding is a quick and inexpensive way to refresh cabinets. So is updating your cabinets' hardware.

Many new knobs or pulls can be purchased at area home-improvement centers such as Lowe's and the Home Depot or even in your Targets, Wal-Marts and Kmart's. At a few dollars each, the cost of such fixtures is minimal compared with the expense of gutting an entire kitchen and starting from scratch.

However you go about upgrading your kitchen cabinets you need to do one thing on a weekly basis: clean them. Peterlin says after he completes a job he tells his customers to use a mild dishwashing soap and gently clean the cabinets once a week.

Pay close attention to areas near the sink and stovetop, where dirt, cooking oil and grease can collect over a period of time, he says.

"If they took more time to clean them it would save them more headaches and heartaches down the road," Peterlin says.

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TIMES LEADER STAFF PHOTOS/MADALYN RUGGIERO

Steve Peterlin and his father, Mike, have been working together since the early 1990s. The father-and-son team refinishes cabinets and other woodwork in addition to hanging wallpaper.

Steve Peterlin works on cabinets in the basement of the Nanticoke home he shares with his parents. After high school, Peterlin joined his father's refinishing and wallpaper-hanging business, Michael Peterlin & Son.

A change of hardware can be the key to revamping a kitchen on a tight budget.

Steve Peterlin of Michael Peterlin & Son screws in the hardware of a newly refinished cabinet door.

After cabinet doors are stripped for 24 hours, they are sprayed with a finish. These days, Mike Peterlin, who runs a Nanticoke-based refinishing and wallpaper-hanging business, says finishes can range from white to black and light to dark depending on a customer's desire.

When the Peterlins moved into their Nanticoke home, they discovered green kitchen cabinets in addition to other major interior issues. To give the kitchen a fresh look, Mike Peterlin stripped the cabinets and stained them ash gray.

Cabinets and other woodwork can be stained a variety of colors. Shown here are touch-up paints Mike and Steve Peterlin use for refinishing jobs.

USEFUL TO YOU

If you think refinishing your kitchen cabinets is your best bet, then make sure you do your homework and ask questions. Know **that** costs can vary widely depending on project size and requirements. It's never a bad idea to ask any contractor for references or to ask around before signing up a contractor.

Whether you're a do-it-yourselfer in a jam after starting a project or looking to have a professional come in, here are a few local businesses **that** specialize in refinishing:

Michael Peterlin & Son
Nanticoke
735-8946