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## A Cabinetry Refresh Can Update a Kitchen

Submitted by NARI Milwaukee

After years of use, kitchen cabinets can show their age. The signs include a dull or worn finish, an out-of-date stain or paint color, water marks, chipped paint and broken doors and drawers.

The experts from NARI Milwaukee have insight on ways to update a kitchen without doing a complete remodel.

“If the cabinets are structurally sound but they’re looking old and shabby, there are a number of cost-effective options to consider, including refinishing, painting and refacing,” says Mike Madson, owner of Colorwheel Painting in Milwaukee.

Refinishing is for wooden stained cabinetry. Homeowners can choose to keep their existing stain or select a new, darker one. The refinishing process includes removing the old varnish, applying stain and then a fresh coat of varnish.

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"For those who opt for a stain change, we're seeing a lot of rich deep color selections like espresso and dark chocolate," says Madson.

While oak cabinetry was prevalent for years, it's now waning in popularity. For homeowners who are interested in doing away with oak, professional painting is an alternative to replacing their cabinetry.

"When painting oak cabinetry, it's important to fill the grain to get an even, uniform look," says Madson.

Stained maple, birch, alder and other wood species don't require grain filling and can be professionally painted without the significant preparation that oak requires.

Madson cautions homeowners to think twice about painting their own cabinetry. It's a slow, tedious process that includes a number of details and steps that DIYers can miss. In addition, there's the safety step of having a system to properly exhaust the room.

Refacing is essentially having new doors and drawer fronts built to replace existing ones. The cabinetry "boxes" remain in place while the fronts are new.

"If you're refacing cabinetry or changing your stain or paint color, it presents an opportunity to consider some other changes," says Cheryl Cincotta, a designer with Valley Cabinet, Inc. in Germantown. "Sometimes, we add a new island, replace a built-in desk with a pantry cupboard or install a new buffet and beverage center in the kitchen."

Another way to update kitchen cabinets is by installing new molding and trim and replacing the door hardware.

"You can also add glass doors to existing cabinets or replace select cabinets with floating shelves to open up the space and give the room a simpler, cleaner look," says Cincotta.

"When you make small but smart aesthetic changes you can really transform the entire look and feel of the space."

In addition to form, Cincotta says the function of cabinetry can be improved by installing full extension, soft close drawer slides and soft close door hinges. The accessibility and usability of cabinetry and can also be enhanced with the addition of accessories like roll out drawers, tray organizers, towel holders and dual garbage and recycling centers.

Both Madson and Cincotta agree that a form or function cabinetry refresh can successfully extend the life of a kitchen for years at a fraction of the cost of a remodel.

To find a qualified contractor or remodeler, start by visiting the NARI Milwaukee website at [narmilwaukee.org](http://narmilwaukee.org) or call 414-771-407 to receive a free copy of "Renovate," NARI's new consumer magazine and membership directory.