

Remodeling is not for the faint of heart. If you've lived through it, you already have some idea. If you haven't, here are some thoughts following the remodel of a 40-year-old kitchen in Honolulu.

Good Planning is Everything. Think about what you want, then think about it some more. You'll have to make a lot of decisions. Take something as simple as the kitchen sink. Do you want a single or double bowl? 18 inches deep or 22? (Remember, if you choose 22 inches, you'll have less room for storage underneath.) And, then there's the faucet, the disposal, the sink strainer and the soap dispenser. Your contractor will need to know your decisions in advance, so try to picture the final product and be as detail oriented as possible.

Mark Time. While still in the planning stages, get a calendar and start marking time: When's the last day you'll have a stove? If you'll be living in the space, what's your plan for feeding your family once your kitchen is gone? Waiting until the last minute to order appliances may cause delays. Delays may mean a second trip for your plumber or electrician if the appliances aren't on the jobsite and ready to go. Consider posting the calendar and a set of plans to help keep everyone on the same page.

Duly Noted. With hundreds of details to remember, keeping notes can be a good thing. Set aside one place to keep your contract, receipts, invoices and the like. Take pictures of the project as it progresses. Hold on to any delivery receipts, instruction books and warranty information that come with appliances. Even your new kitchen cabinets or bathroom vanity may have important instructions for care and cleaning that you'll need later.

Demolition is Scary. Be prepared for what your house may look like after it's been gutted. You won't recognize your kitchen after the cabinets, sink and appliances have been removed, but take heart, this too shall pass. Suppress the panic and try to visualize the end product.

Expect the unexpected. And, even if your job doesn't call for an electrician or a plumber, you may want to have some names at the ready in case a pipe is broken or some wiring needs to be fixed. If you don't have a name, your contractor may recommend a licensed electrician or a licensed plumber that he or she works with regularly. Keep in mind, "electrical contractors" and "electricians" are two different things. "Licensed electrical contractors" are people or companies that employ electricians. "Licensed electricians" are individual tradesmen with the training and experience to do the actual work. So, you may hire a licensed electrical contractor to rewire your house, but you should see licensed electricians doing the work. The same goes for plumbers and plumbing contractors.



Plastic sheeting is wonderful. Dirt, dust and debris are inevitable. It will get everywhere and you won't be able to get rid of it until the job is done. Clear plastic poly sheeting can be used to protect furniture and cover exposed holes. Hanging over the doorway to a bedroom, it can help keep at least one or two rooms relatively dust free.

Appliances. Appliances have technical specifications that your contractor or design professional will need to know before work starts. For example, where the electrical cord is located on the back of the new dishwasher or the gas valve on the back of your new gas stove. The water line for a refrigerator with an icemaker, the electrical outlet for a garbage disposal... your contractor will need to know all of the details in order to get the job done right.

Countertops. Custom countertops don't get measured for until after all cabinets and appliances have been installed. Because they need to be exact, a template is made after everything is in place, so expect a delay of 2 or 3 weeks while countertops are fabricated. There may be a significant delay if the countertop you've chosen is fabricated on the mainland.

Flooring. If your renovation plan doesn't include new flooring, think about the existing "footprint." Does the old flooring run under the old cabinets and appliances, or does it end at the toe kick? If the new cabinets aren't the same depth as the old cabinets, you may be left with a gap where the flooring ends and where the new cabinets begin. But don't despair. Cabinet base molding may cover the gap.

Cabinets. When shopping for cabinets, look for a good display that shows you what baseboards and exposed ends will look like. Door and drawer fronts are sometimes made of different materials than the cabinet box, so looking at a sample door won't show you what the ends of the cabinets will look like. If you can, try to find a large display or at least detailed photos. (And, a contractor's license is required to install cabinets in Hawaii.)

Budget high. This goes along with expecting surprises. Fix your budget then add a healthy percent for emergencies. If you have the money to take care of the extra added expenses, you'll feel good. If you come in "under budget," you'll feel great.

Be available or be around. Things come up, decisions have to be made and someone has to be there to make last minute decisions. If a contractor can't get a hold of you, he or she may go ahead and make the decision without you. Although it may be easier for professionals to work on site without the homeowner underfoot, if you can be there occasionally, why not? You'll get a good education once you see what goes into building your house, and if you ever need to do it again, you'll know what to look for.

Most importantly, hire a licensed contractor. There are lots of reasons why. Not only do licensed contractors have the training and experience necessary to obtain a contractor's license, licensed contractors have liability insurance and are responsible if a worker is injured on a jobsite. This protects you as a homeowner from putting your property at risk if anything is damaged on your project or if anyone is injured. Licensed contractors can also apply for and obtain the necessary building permits for your project.

Good remodeling takes homework and planning but your efforts will be rewarded... when you're cooking in your new kitchen or relaxing in your new tub, you'll wonder why you didn't remodel before!

RICO investigates unlicensed contracting and violations of Hawaii's licensing laws. To check licensing status or for information about hiring a licensed professional, call the Consumer Resource Center at 587-4272 or visit the State's website at: cca.hawaii.gov/rico.

RESOURCES

The Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs (DCCA), and its Regulated Industries Complaints Office (RICO), offer tools, tips, and services you can use to check out an individual or business. Information is available by calling **(808) 587-4272** or online at cca.hawaii.gov/business_online.

For information about filing a complaint or to report unlicensed activity, call RICO's Consumer Resource Center at **(808) 587-4272** or visit us online at cca.hawaii.gov/rico.

Neighbor island residents can dial the following numbers then 7-4272 followed by the # sign:

Kauai.....	274-3141
Maui.....	984-2400
Hawaii.....	974-4000
Lanai & Molokai.	1-800-468-4644

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REMODELING TIPS FROM THE TRENCHES



Regulated Industries Complaints Office

235 S. Beretania Street, Ninth Floor
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813
cca.hawaii.gov/rico

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