

A HOMEOWNER'S GUIDE BY UNQ DESIGN

Think Like a Kitchen Designer

THE 7 KITCHEN DESIGN DECISIONS EVERY HOMEOWNER SHOULD MAKE BEFORE REMODELING



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UNQ Design • Kitchen Design • Remodeling • Space Planning



A NOTE FROM THE UNQ DESIGN TEAM

“A Beautiful Kitchen Is Not Automatically a Functional Kitchen”

*—Carlos Gonzalez, BFA
Interior Designer, UNQ Design*

A successful kitchen remodel starts with understanding how the kitchen needs to function, not by choosing cabinet colors, countertops, or finishes.

UNQ Design is a family-owned design and remodeling company that has helped homeowners create beautiful, functional kitchens since 2011. Our design team combines formal interior design education with real-world construction experience. Carlos and Stacy Gonzalez both hold Bachelor of Fine Arts degrees in Interior Design, and Carlos brings more than 20 years of direct experience in construction and remodeling.

One of the most common problems we see is construction beginning before the design is complete. Walls are demolished, contractors are hired, and important decisions are postponed until the project is already underway. At that point, homeowners are often forced to make rushed choices under pressure, when changes are more expensive and the available options may be limited.

This guide was created for homeowners who are preparing to hire a contractor and want to avoid costly mistakes before construction begins.

The seven decisions inside will help you think beyond the appearance of the kitchen and consider how the space should work every day. You will learn how to evaluate workflow, storage, cabinet planning, kitchen zones, appliance placement, and the way your family actually uses the room. Before the first cabinet is ordered or the first wall is removed, the most important questions should already have answers.

UNQ Design provides kitchen design and plan-review services for homeowners locally and remotely.

Carlos Gonzalez

UNQ Design



Lesson 1: Design the Kitchen Around Your Life



Do not start by filling walls with cabinets. A kitchen should begin with the people who will use it, not with a cabinet catalog. Before deciding what goes on each wall, study the family's routines, cooking habits, storage needs, and daily frustrations. First determine what needs to live inside each cabinet, how often it is used, and where it should be located.

**WHAT LIVES ON
YOUR COUNTERTOPS
TODAY THAT COULD
HAVE A BETTER
HOME?**

BEFORE CHOOSING CABINETS, **DETERMINE:**

- ✓ How does the family cook?
- ✓ Who uses the kitchen?
- ✓ What stays on the countertops?
- ✓ What items are used daily?
- ✓ What are the current challenges?
- ✓ What needs a better home?

Lesson 2: Plan the Kitchen in Zones



"The best kitchens are not designed as individual cabinets. They are designed as connected zones that support the way a family lives."

*- Carlos Gonzalez, BFA
Interior Designer, UNQ Design*

1

Beverage Zone

Coffee, drinks, glassware, mugs, and beverage supplies grouped together so people can make drinks without interrupting the main cooking area.

2

Snack Zone

A dedicated place for snacks, lunch supplies, and frequently used items, especially helpful for children and busy families.

3

Appliance Pantry Zone

Refrigeration, pantry storage, ovens, food storage, and smaller appliances intentionally organized as one support system.

4

Prep Zone

Designed to be near the cooktop so meals can be organized, measured, and prepared before the heat is ever turned on.

5

Cook Zone

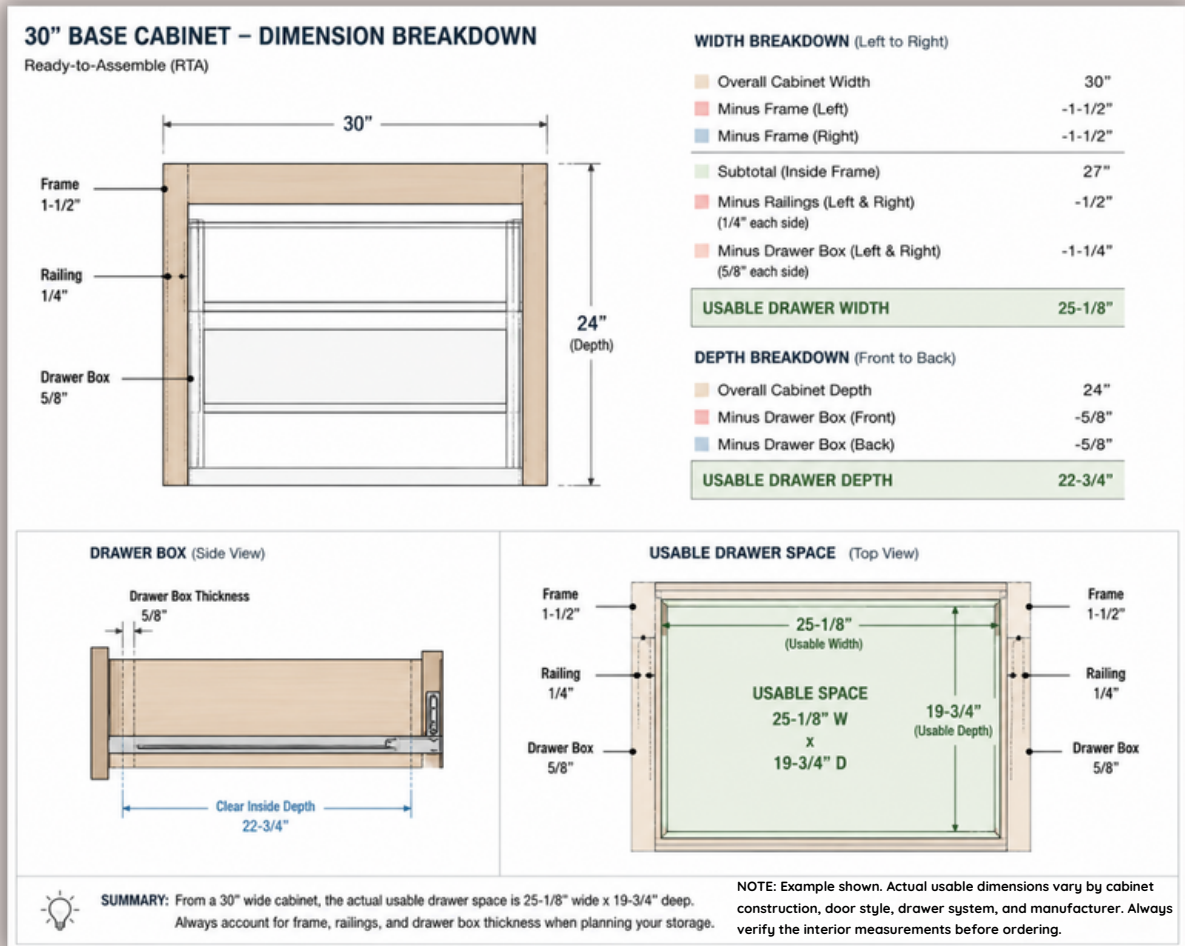
The cooktop, ventilation, pots, pans, utensils, oils, and cooking tools placed where they are actually needed.

6

Modern Butler's Pantry

A secondary work area that can handle serving, cleanup, appliances, storage, entertaining, or overflow from the main kitchen.

Lesson 3: Cabinet Size Is Not Usable Storage



WHAT THE CABINET SIZE DOESN'T TELL YOU:



- ✓ A 30-inch cabinet does not provide 30 inches of usable storage.
- ✓ Face frames, door styles, drawer slides, drawer boxes, hinges, and cabinet construction reduce usable space.
- ✓ Inset cabinetry can reduce openings more than homeowners expect.
- ✓ Pots, pans, dishes, and appliances should be measured before cabinet sizes are finalized.

QUICK NOTE:
**ALWAYS ASK FOR THE
INTERIOR USABLE
DIMENSIONS, NOT
JUST THE CABINET'S
LABELED SIZE.**

Lesson 4: Decide What Lives Inside Each Cabinet



DESIGN AROUND BELONGINGS, NOT JUST CABINET ELEVATIONS.

- | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| ✓ Pots and pans | ✓ Paper towels |
| ✓ Baking sheets | ✓ Cleaning products |
| ✓ Small appliances | ✓ Food storage containers |
| ✓ Utensils | ✓ Everyday dishes |
| ✓ Spices and cooking oils | ✓ Serving ware |
| ✓ Trash and recycling | ✓ Seasonal items |

QUICK NOTE:
PLAN WHAT WILL LIVE INSIDE EACH CABINET BEFORE THE CABINET ORDER IS PLACED.

Lesson 5: Protect the Workflow



MAJOR KITCHEN MOVEMENTS TO THINK ABOUT:

- ✓ Refrigerator to prep area
- ✓ Sink to prep area
- ✓ Prep area to cooktop
- ✓ Dishwasher to dish storage
- ✓ Grocery unloading to refrigerator and pantry
- ✓ Trash access during preparation and cleanup

WORKFLOW IS ABOUT MORE THAN THE KITCHEN TRIANGLE.

A functional kitchen considers how groceries enter the room, where food is prepared, how ingredients move to the cooktop, and where dishes go after cleanup. Each movement should feel natural, direct, and uninterrupted.

**WHERE DOES YOUR
KITCHEN SLOW YOU
DOWN?**

Lesson 6: Make Important Decisions in the Right Order

A successful kitchen remodel depends on making the important decisions in the right order. The design should be completed before demolition begins, cabinets are ordered, or a contractor prices an unfinished plan.

Once the layout is established, the existing conditions should be verified. That may include confirming whether a wall is structural and checking for plumbing, electrical wiring, gas lines, ductwork, or other conditions that could affect the design.

This planning creates an opportunity to solve problems while changes are still simple, options are still available, and costs can be evaluated before work begins. The same issue discovered during construction can require new materials, additional labor, change orders, and weeks of delay.

A well-developed design plan does more than show what the kitchen will look like. It helps prevent unnecessary work, gives contractors clearer information, improves the accuracy of pricing, and reduces the risk of expensive decisions being made under pressure.

“The earlier a problem is identified, the less it usually costs to solve.”

-Carlos Gonzalez, BFA

Interior Designer, UNQ Design



Lesson 7: Get a Second Set of Eyes Before Construction

A professional kitchen design review can be the difference between correcting a problem on paper and paying thousands, or even tens of thousands, to correct it during construction. A professional review can uncover storage limitations, workflow problems, appliance conflicts, missing details, and construction concerns before cabinets are ordered, contracts are signed, or demolition begins. Identifying these issues early gives you time to correct the design, compare solutions, and receive more accurate pricing before labor and materials are committed. The goal is not to create unnecessary changes. It is to make sure your kitchen is functional, buildable, and properly planned before expensive work begins.

BOOK A DESIGN CLARITY SESSION

Your kitchen remodel is a major investment. At UNQ Design, we combine interior design and construction experience to identify problems that could affect functionality, budget, and schedule before construction begins. The right plan can prevent costly changes and months of delays.

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A family-owned kitchen design and remodeling company

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