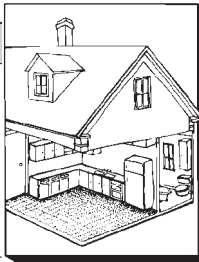


Customizing With Stock Cabinets

by Greg Wolf



Customizing with stock cabinets seems like an unusual idea to many people. When I suggest it to builders, they often respond by asking: "Why would I want to tear a cabinet apart and then put it back together?"

But even skeptics warm up to the idea once they understand that a custom look does not require major modifications. "Customizing," in this sense, simply means using standard components such as cabinets, valances, shelves, moldings, and fillers in unique ways to solve the storage and design requirements of your customer.

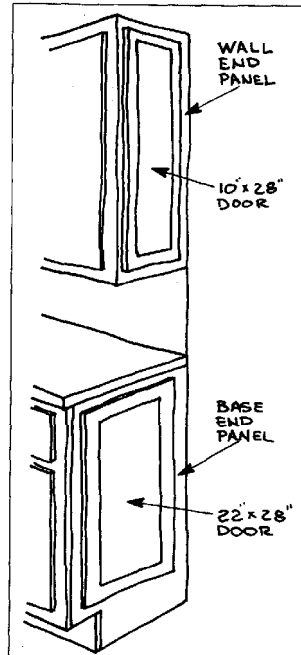
Reasons for Customizing

There are two principal reasons why people buy kitchens designed with stock cabinetry: price and immediate availability.

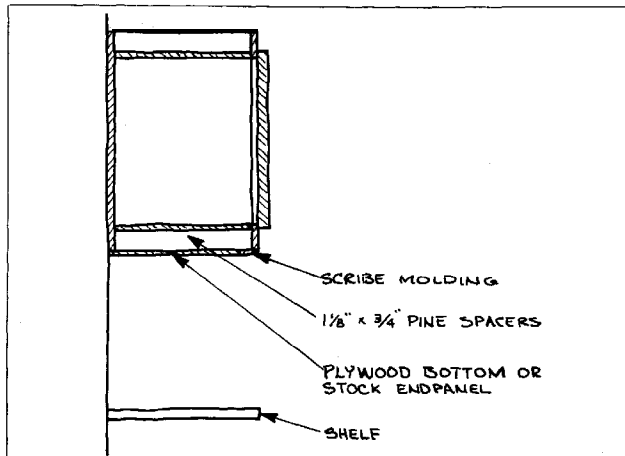
The customer who is shopping for a kitchen usually begins by looking at a state-of-the-art kitchen, complete with all accessories, in the showroom window. But the price tag for that kitchen may be too high.

Then the customer usually looks at a "plain Jane" stock kitchen, and begins to lose enthusiasm. If the dream kitchen is out of reach, why bother with a new kitchen at all?

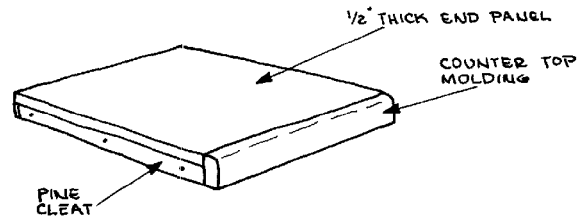
At that point, as a designer or



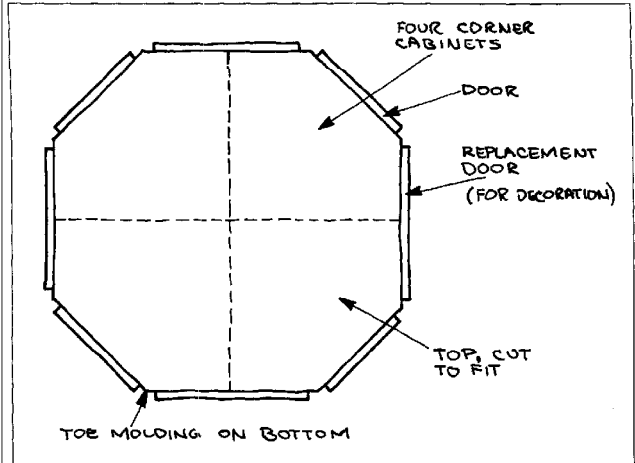
Exposed cabinet ends can be pretty unexciting to look at. In this sketch, replacement doors are used as end panels to add visual interest.



When the underside of a cabinet is above eye level, it can be given a finished look by simply adding a bottom panel, with scribe molding to trim out the front edge. The drawing shows a stock shelving panel below.



Stock cabinet components can be used to create attractive open shelves. In this sketch, the shelf consists of a 1/2-inch cabinet end panel trimmed in front with countertop molding.



An attractive octagon-shaped island can be built with four corner cabinets. Build a base with 2 x 4s, then set in the cabinet and cut the countertop to fit. Cover the toe kick with standard toe-kick molding. Replacement cabinet doors should be applied to the few faces where the cabinet end panels meet—to mask the joints and provide a uniform appearance on all sides.

consultant, you can come to the rescue. You've identified the problem areas of the customer's present kitchen, and know what features are desired. You can suggest a functional, well-designed kitchen that is within the customer's budget.

Don't go overboard: If the project gets too complex, you'll lose the benefits of working with stock cabinets.

By making creative use of stock items, you can spruce up the most basic kitchen, provide the features your customer wants, and close the sale.

Another advantage is speed of installation. Many people don't like to wait too long for a kitchen installation after they've signed a contract and made a deposit. By using stock components in your "custom" designs, you minimize the delay. The short lead time allows you to install more

kitchens, and get paid quickly. This can add up to more profits, and more satisfied customers.

Keep It Simple

The designs I suggest are relatively simple, and can be constructed at the job site with little difficulty. Don't go overboard with custom designs: If the project gets too complex, you will lose the benefits of working with stock cabinets.

Years ago, when I was selling retail kitchens, customizing stock cabinets was a necessity. Back then, there were very few optional accessories and features available from stock manufacturers.

Today, that is changed. The diagrams on these pages make use of readily available stock items, with only minor modifications. The results can rival the look of a fine, custom kitchen. By becoming aware of the variety of materials that are available, and working with manufacturer representatives, you'll find unique ways to customize stock items for virtually any kitchen. ■

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