

Kitchen Videos

Making Kitchen Cabinets, with Paul Levine. 60 minute videotape; Beta or VHS; \$29.95 from Taunton Press, Box 355, Newtown, CT 06470.

"Hometime" Kitchen Renovation, with Dean Johnson and Peggy Knapp. 60 minute videotape; VHS; \$15.50 from Craftsman Book Co., 6058 Corte Del Cedro, Carlsbad, CA 92009



Making Kitchen Cabinets with Paul Levine is just what you'd expect in a video from Taunton Press; it is a well-done, clear, step-by-step description of how to produce a set of "modified" Euro-style kitchen cabinets in your home workshop. Levine uses the plywood box method instead of face frames, and relies on ordinary machine tools and simple details. His method allows for correction of errors at each stage of the job.

Levine is personable and knowledgeable. The photography, especially the close-up shots, is clear, at times presenting information completely without the benefit of any explanatory voice-over, as in the case of squaring up hinge base plates.

The best feature of the tape is its attention to detail, which, after all, is what you might expect from a cabinet maker. Headlines introduce each segment of the film. Levine offers an abundance of practical tips from his introductory overview of the installed job to final hanging of doors. He recommends products like full-extension hardware by brand name, shows how to cut laminate (used for inner and outer faces of all doors and drawers) by the score-and-snap method, suggests taking the phone off the hook during assembly, and advises you to turn the cabinet on its side when installing slides so you won't be fighting gravity.

Safety consciousness is evident in the initial disclaimer (remember, folks, woodworking can be dangerous) and the recommendation that you use charcoal filter vapor masks when using contact cement. Also, Levine uses ear protectors while running the table saw. The main limitation of this tape is that Levine does not discuss making the countertop. It's also apparent that you can't take the video into the shop. However, a companion, 192-page book is available for \$17.95 (\$39.95 for the set), and the video is keyed to the book with page numbers unobtrusively inserted into the corner of the screen. If you like Levine's modern style and construction method, it would be hard to go wrong on this video.

Viewers of the "Hometime" series on television will probably recognize Craftsman's *Kitchen Renovation* video, featuring Dean Johnson and Peggy Knapp. In contrast to Levine, Knapp and Johnson show you how to install—not make—store-bought cabinets, including a 45-degree dog-leg peninsula. They also show you how to plumb the kitchen and wire appliances. Like Levine, the "stars" of this video are personable and competent, but they seem more like they are working from a script than Levine, who comes across as if he were speaking quite informally.

Aimed primarily at the do-it-yourselfer, the "Hometime" tape opens with its worst feature—a commercial for a brand of pick-up truck. Later in the tape, the truck is plugged again where Johnson and Knapp pick up

their cabinets at the supply yard. The tape ends with yet another plug. Even the video case and the accompanying "Project Guide" carry advertising messages. Personally, I'd rather pay more for the tape and dispense with the commercials.

Johnson and Knapp start at the drawing board, showing various types of kitchen layouts and describing the work triangle. They stress the importance of accurate dimensions, give a preview of the job, and introduce some (but not all) of the tools you'll need. They also remind viewers to plan for alternative cooking arrangements while the job is under way. Next they show how to find studs by the hammer tap method (no mention of a stud finder), and they show how to find the high point of the floor and establish level lines on the walls for base and wall cabinets. They recommend removing doors during installation, and using identifying tags to get them back in the right place. They show different types of cabinets (wall, lazy susan, etc.), but only mention various styles.

Knapp and Johnson then proceed through a step-by-step installation procedure, showing how to shim, level, and temporarily support units. They also show how to scribe for cabinets and backsplash. They go fast and assume a working knowledge of cabinet vocabulary among their viewers. If you miss something, you can replay the tape of course, and the "Project Guide" includes a brief glossary. The latter might not be all that helpful though. For instance, it defines a soffit as the underside of an overhanging cornice, but doesn't tell you what a cornice is.

Unlike Levine, Knapp and Johnson show how to install a precut countertop and give a pretty good view of plumbing with both plastic and copper pipe, including installation of a loop vent for an island sink. The wiring information is weaker, though, since the electricity was already roughed in.

Besides the heavy commercialism there are a few other drawbacks to this tape. For example, Knapp and Johnson use a template for making a sink cutout, but it isn't clear where the template came from. Was it delivered with the sink? If not, what dimensions/allowances do you use to make one? I also question Knapp's (or the scriptwriter's) knowledge when she says that the gypsum board walls were painted with a primer that provided a "vapor barrier." Is this true of all primers? (No.) And why does that matter on interior partition walls? The pair also don't use a V-shaped "crowsfoot" to mark their measurements, which I thought was sloppy technique. Similarly, the "Project Guide" is not very useful. It contains a check-off shopping list, a handful of planning and safety tips, and one sentence on estimating (let your lumberyard do it). The "Project Guide" also comments on codes and permits, and restates the

taped material on layout and shimming, and typical cabinet dimensions. (Mysteriously, the drawing showed sloped faces on both base and wall units.) Finally, the "Project Guide" contains the glossary, and a "Reading List." This last item consists of a reference to the National Kitchen and Bath Association and Kohler Company. With all due respect to these organizations, there are a number of excellent books available that could have been recommended instead.

My final thought on the "Hometime" tape is that it makes things seem too easy, although Knapp and Johnson do acknowledge that "your house" may have problems they are not able to cover on the video (an understatement with respect to any remodeling job I've ever undertaken). To compound this shortcoming they gamely refer viewers to the accompanying "reading List" for solutions to such unanticipated problems. Having said all that, the "Hometime" video offers an adequate introduction to cabinet installation, and you can probably put your VCR on fast forward during the commercial segments.

Storage Secrets

Sunset Kitchen Storage by Sunset Books, Menlo Park, Calif., 1989; 79 pages; 8 1/2x11 paperback; \$6.95

Regular *Journal* readers know of my fondness for *Sunset* books. *Sunset Kitchen Storage* features the usual mix of glossy color photos and rather garish orange drawings illustrating a potpourri of space-saving ideas for cabinetry, islands, storage walls and pantries, carts, doors, shelving, drawer organizers, carousels, accessories, and safety hardware. Just the kind of things you need to impress clients with your design astuteness. A handy source list completes the text.

—Paul Hanke

Free & Cheap

Specs on the Wall are found in *Lath and Plaster Construction*, a product brochure from Gold Bond Building Products. This free booklet provides 20 pages of descriptions, characteristics, test data, and ratings on lath and plaster systems, including veneer plaster systems. Both advantages and limitations are given for each system in addition to specifications and suggestions for application. Write to Lath and Plaster Systems Communications Department, Gold Bond Building Products, 2001 Rexford Road, Charlotte, NC 28211; 704/365-7300.

Making It Match: Two companion brochures available from the Kohler Company are *The Great Bathroom Coloring Book* and *How To Put Together the Colors That Go Together*. The "coloring book" contains 35 pages of illustrations and text explaining color groupings called families, and shows how the colors within a family can work together. The brochure describes the Kohler Color Coordinates system, which is a joint effort between this company and other leading manufacturers to produce products that match. A toll-free number is given for contracting local dealers.

The second brochure in this two-part guide is basically a color chart listing all the Kohler plumbing fixture colors. It also lists the coordinating colors and patterns offered by manufacturers of ceramic tile, wallcoverings, laminates, cabinetry, floor coverings, and (believe it or not) toilet tissue. For free copies, write to Kohler Color Coordinates, Dept. KC, Drawer 459, Thiensville, WI 53092; 800/772-1814.

—Josie Masterson