

# Top Treatments for Cabinets

by Michael Poster



When people first walk into a room, their gaze tends to fall on objects that are at eye level. In a kitchen, this means that the overhead cabinets will be the first thing people notice.

Cabinets that are simply fastened to the wall lack any visual connection to the surrounding walls and ceiling. A traditional approach that visually “anchors” the cabinets involves constructing a drywall soffit, installing the upper cabinets tight to this soffit, and trimming the juncture with a crown molding.

Over the years, our company has developed two additional approaches to this important area of kitchen cabinetry that are aesthetically pleasing and affordable. The approach we use is most often determined by the ceiling height of the room.

## Greater Than Eight

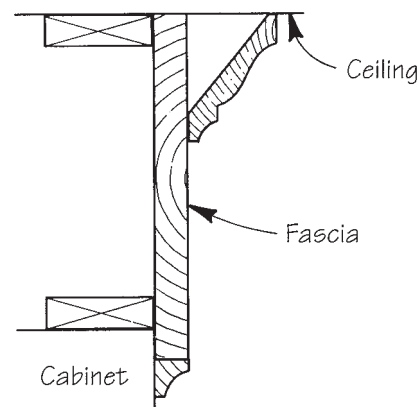
In kitchens where the ceiling height is 8 feet or higher, many customers will use the top of the overhead cabinets as a display area. Since face-frame cabi-

nets are typically made with recessed tops, display items set in these recesses are difficult to see, and cleaning these recesses is always a chore. Traditional kitchen designs that feature a crown molding fastened at the top of the cabinets add yet another crevice that collects dirt.

Our company provides an easy-to-clean display area by constructing a continuous cabinet top, using  $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch birch plywood. We cut running lengths for standard-depth cabinets, and custom-cut the tops for corner cabinets and other odd-sized cabinets. After fastening the plywood to the top of the cabinets, we attach  $\frac{3}{4} \times \frac{3}{4}$ -inch molding that matches the cabinet species to the front edge of these tops, and then apply a crown molding to the face frame and the underside of the plywood (see Figure 1). This detail provides an easily cleaned, low maintenance surface that eliminates the hard-to-care-for nooks and crannies inevitable with a crown-only detail.

This style of continuous top projects beyond the cabinets on three

## Crown with Fascia



**Figure 2.** A continuous fascia on wall cabinets produces a built-in look. Apply a crown molding at the ceiling juncture, and a cove molding at the face frame of the upper cabinets.

sides, and requires an additional setback of a few inches at window and door casings. If the cabinets crowd the casing, you'll have to cope the tops and crown into the adjacent casing, which can be a complicated and time-consuming procedure.

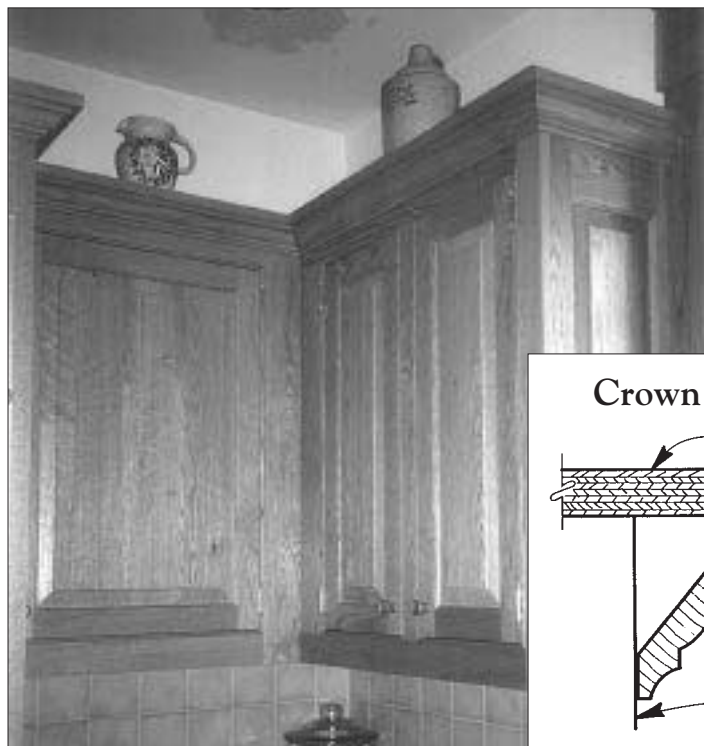
## Eight Feet and Under

When ceilings are less than 8 feet, and display space is limited, adding a continuous fascia at the top of the cabinets will produce a built-in look. With this design, we apply a crown molding where the fascia meets the ceiling, and a cove molding at the cabinets (Figure 2). We use solid wood for fascia 6 to 8 inches wide, but beyond 8 inches, veneered plywood is a better choice because it won't expand and contract.

Before you commit to any trim strategy, be sure the profiles you select are available from your cabinet supplier, and in the required finish. If the cabinets have been stained, it's nearly impossible to match the finish using a stock molding and staining on site.

And don't forget to consider the additional costs associated with special molding treatments. I allow \$10 to \$20 dollars per lineal foot for either design. This range includes labor (my installer charges \$5 a lineal foot) and materials, and can vary depending on wood species and molding selection. ■

Michael Poster owns and operates Michael Poster Woodworking in Montrose, Pa.



**Figure 1.** The author uses birch plywood,  $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch square stock, and crown molding to create an attractive and easy-to-clean display area above the overhead cabinets.

## Crown with Shelf

