

Nothin Cookin' in the Kitchen

Let's all jump into the TMPeople time machine and go back a few months to around Veterans Day of 2012. I'm in my office telling Chris Pedersen that my wife and I have decided to remodel our kitchen. Yay! And I'm telling him that I have a counter top guy and a cabinet guy and a floor guy all lined up. Chris' eyes narrow a bit. And when I tell him that these guys say that the kitchen won't be done by Thanksgiving, but certainly by Christmas, he looks at me with pity and perhaps sadness at my naiveté, and says "No, it won't be done by Christmas, and it probably won't be done by Memorial Day." And as he walked out of my office he added "And it will be the cabinet guy; it's always the cabinet guy." I seem to have touched a nerve. But, it turns out Chris was spot-on correct, because here I am on the Vernal Equinox of 2013, and I still don't have a kitchen – and it's all due to the cabinet guy.

Why didn't I just do it myself, I hear you asking? Well, because professionals will certainly complete the job much more quickly than I will. Stop laughing. And when it comes to the kitchen, I'd have a hard time mansplaining to my wife that I could do the job just as well as a professional. But I could. I know it. But I didn't.

So, if you want a new kitchen, the most important thing is to have a big wheelbarrow full of money. That's pretty much it. Then, after you and your significant other are finished arguing about what the new kitchen will look like, and you've finally given in on all of your ideas (allow a couple weeks for that), it's time to begin.

Get your new appliances lined up. That's pretty easy. Then you need to deal with any structural changes to the kitchen – moving walls, changing overhead lighting, etc. If you are installing a new laminate countertop, you can give the dimensions of the countertop(s) to whoever you are buying it from and they will make it for you. Then all you have to do is attach it, caulk, and install the sink, faucet, and plumbing. If you are installing granite, or marble, or a synthetic such as Corian, first be sure your wheelbarrow is very, very large, and then just hire someone to do it for you. Now it's time for the cabinets.

You have choices. You can buy all-new cabinets, either custom made, or off-the-shelf. Or if your existing cabinet frames are in okay shape, and you like the layout of your cabinets, you can have someone refinish the frames and make new doors for them, adding new hardware and perhaps a crown molding. You can even have cabinet guy modify or completely rebuild some of the frames and refinish the rest. Refinishing can mean sanding, staining, and applying polyurethane, or it can mean covering the cabinet frames with an adhesive laminate, or they can be painted. The trick to painting cabinets is to use a high quality stain-blocking primer, and a waterborne paint especially designed for cabinets, and finally a clear coat. You

should use a low VOC paint since you have to, you know, live there. The paint is very expensive \$70-\$140 a gallon, and should be applied with a high volume, low pressure spray gun and air compressor, lightly sanding between coats. Using the spray gun means you apply a coat very quickly, and it dries very quickly resulting in an even, rock-hard, scratch-proof coating that looks great. Of course, if you have a lot of time and little money, you can also use a brush and a can of Home Depot's finest, but it won't have the same even finish, and you'll have to touch it up fairly frequently.

If you've read this far without passing out in boredom, I'd like to pass along a few things I've learned during my kitchen odyssey, because of my giving nature:

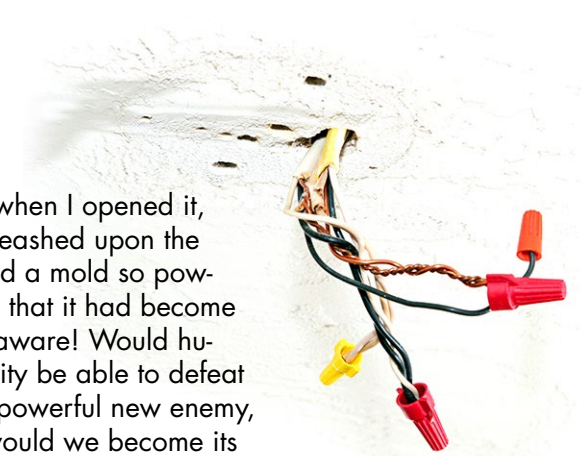
1. LED lighting has come a long way in only the last year. I replaced four buzzing and flickering fluorescent tube lights in my kitchen with six Cree recessed LED lights and fixtures for less than \$35 each. The lights are a nice warm color, about 2700 degrees K. That's a tiny bit less orange than an incandescent bulb, but nowhere near white. And they are much brighter than I expected. So much so that I replaced the switch with a dimmer. Plus I'm using only a small fraction of the electricity I was using with the old, ugly lights, and on top of that, the LEDs are supposed to last for decades and I should be able to pass them down to my grandchildren, or something. I don't see the down side.

Since those LEDs worked out so well, I decided to try some LED under-cabinet lighting. I found some on the Internet that looked pretty good. Each one is a very thin 10 inch strip, about a half inch wide, so if installed under the cabinet lip, they are essentially invisible. A package of 10 with two power supplies and wire, hardware, etc. was less than \$150. Now, you have to be careful about the power supplies. Ask Mike Hamilton. The power supplies recommended for his LED under-cabinet lights turned out not to be powerful enough, causing all kinds of problems, ultimately necessitating his buying a new, bigger power supply. I hoped that if I connected four lights per power supply, instead of the five recommended by the manufacturer I could, Bieber willing, avoid that problem. It worked. The lights look great, the color is warm, the light output is just right, but I do notice that the power supplies still get a little warm to the touch when the lights are on. So word to the wise, over-buy the power supply and don't use the minimum size suggested by the manufacturer.

2. Since I was remodeling the ceiling in order to accommodate my new lights, I had to do my least favorite thing: dry-wall repair. I had to put up new drywall to fill the voids left by the old lights and make new holes for the new lights. So I went down the basement to get my tub o' joint compound. It was only a few months old so it should still be good.

But when I opened it, I unleashed upon the world a mold so powerful that it had become self-aware! Would humanity be able to defeat this powerful new enemy, or would we become its slaves? But then I looked closely and saw that the mold had picked Memphis to defeat Michigan State in its NCAA bracket. Ha-ha! Stupid sentient plaster mold! So, back at the Home Depot I noticed that right next to the tubs o' joint compound were 20 pound bags of dry joint compound for about the same price as a 2 pound tub. I never noticed that before. And the bags had different setting times, one as short as 20 minutes. Normal wet joint compound in the tub takes about a day to dry before you can sand it. That means that assuming 3 coats of joint compound, at least 3 days before you can paint. With this stuff, and a little help from a hair dryer, I had it repaired and painted all in one day – just like Scrooge in "A Christmas Carol." And since you mix up a little batch at a time, what's left in the bag never goes bad.

3. As you know, no matter how many sheets of plastic or how many tarps you use to cover furniture and floors, paint droplets will always manage to find that tiny sliver of space where the sheets or tarps have separated, and violating all known laws of physics, manage to





land on whatever it they shouldn't. And occasionally, enchanted paint droplets manage to break through the space-time continuum, and appear on things completely covered by tarps or plastic. Needless to say, I had plastic covering all of our new appliances and the counter tops, and the few cabinets the cabinet guy had managed to complete. Yet, after I painted the ceiling, my wife noticed many tiny paint droplets on the front of the new, beautiful, stainless steel refrigerator. So I started scraping them off with my fingernail, but that was really slow going because there were a million of them, so I picked up a Scotch Brite® sponge out of the sink and began wiping with the sponge side. That did nothing. [SPOILER ALERT: I'm an idiot]. So I flipped the sponge over and used the abrasive side. That worked great, except for the 10,000 tiny scratches now all over the front of the refrigerator, including that little plastic touch screen that you use to select water, ice, GPS, etc. Yeah, that's all scratched too. But here's a thing: It turns out that Turtle Wax rubbing compound, when applied to a rag and rubbed on the refrigerator in the direction of the grain, takes those tiny scratches right out! That's right, the same stuff you used back in 1971 to make your Trans Am look bitchin', can fix your appliances! Oh, you weren't even born in 1971? So old... Anyway, the liquid kind that comes in a plastic bottle is supposedly less abrasive than

the paste, so I used the liquid. It worked perfectly. And, even better, Mother's® Plastic Polish (also at Pep Boys) when applied and rubbed in a circular motion with a microfiber cloth does the same thing to the scratches in the acrylic touch screen! In fact, it worked so well that I took it out to my 15 year-old Mazda beater with its jaundice-yellow, fogged plastic headlight lenses, rubbed it in, and the lenses became clear – the nasty yellow and fogginess came right out; I can drive at night again! It's great stuff.

4. I also learned that when the cabinet guy fails to mount the island to the floor as he assured everyone he would do well in advance of the countertop guy's arrival, the countertop guy after a deep sigh or two, will just do it do it himself so that he can get the countertop installed when he said he would.
5. And finally, the most important thing I learned: It will be the cabinet guy; it's always the cabinet guy. **TM**

