



For Love & Money

SEVEN KITCHEN DESIGN DECISIONS YOU'LL NEVER REGRET BY KATE DALEY

As the hosts of W Network's hit series "Love It or List It Vancouver," designer **Jillian Harris** and real-estate consultant **Todd Talbot** have been known to disagree on the odd design detail. What might surprise you, however, is that when it comes to making major kitchen makeover decisions, the dueling duo often find themselves on common ground. In fact, their advice on how to get the most from your kitchen reno makes perfect sense whether you're putting your house on the market or investing for long-term living.



JILLIAN HARRIS



TODD TALBOT

— MAKE ROOM FOR AN ISLAND —

TODD TALBOT: Nothing beats a nice big island that has a bunch of stools around it. It's a magnet for conversation. Make sure you run gas to the island for a cooktop, so you can socialize with guests while you're preparing a meal. And don't forget to add power outlets. Personally, I prefer an island to be at the same height as the countertop, because when you bring it up to bar height you lose counter space. One of the first things homebuyers look for is how much counter space a kitchen has.

JILLIAN HARRIS: A counter-height island is definitely the best way to go. I love creating a custom island from a vintage piece of furniture, then topping it with a slab of marble or quartz.

— LAY HARDWOOD FLOORS —

JH: I find the grout in tile floors always stains and catches food, and with laminate you can see a lot of bubbling. You just can't go wrong with a quality hardwood floor.

TT: I love wood too, but what's even more important is that you're consistent with your flooring, especially in a small or open-concept space. Running hardwood throughout the entire space opens it up visually and makes it feel much larger. ◻

PHOTOGRAPHY: JANIS NICOLAY (LEFT); WNETWORK (HARRIS); ERIC MILNER (TALBOT)

— **INSTALL SUBWAY TILE** —

JH: I once tried a Carrara marble backsplash, and it stained instantly. Ever since, I've always gone for white subway tiles. It's a classic look that's never going to go out of style, and it won't break the bank.

TT: You're certainly not going to offend anyone by putting in a white backsplash, and subway tile will stand the test of time. In comparison, a vintage tile backsplash is a bad choice from a real-estate perspective because it's just too personal.



Domsjö ceramic and powder-coated steel sink, \$244, ikea.ca.

— **CHOOSE A FARMHOUSE SINK** —

TT: When buyers look at a house, they sometimes forget about practicality and are wooed by something that simply looks cool. Lately, a lot of developers have been putting in those single-bowl industrial sinks that are very sleek but aren't necessarily functional.

JH: Exactly. Those hard industrial edges look good, but stuff gets stuck in the corners, and they never drain properly. I'd much rather have a beautiful double-bowl farmhouse apron sink, paired with brass fixtures. I'm crazy about brass!

Caesarstone quartz in Frosty Carrina, from \$90 per square foot, caesarstone.ca.

— **INVEST IN QUARTZ COUNTERTOPS** —

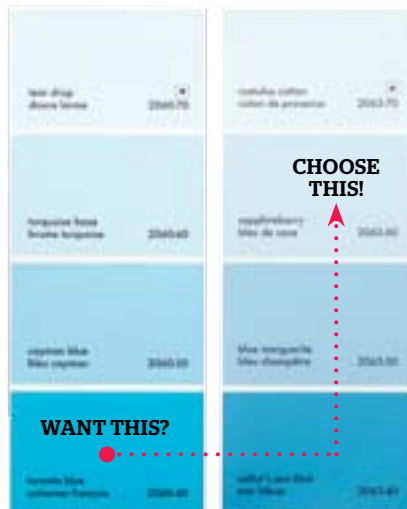
JH: White countertops make a kitchen feel clean and fresh. You can't always do Carrara marble though. It's soft and can get damaged easily. Instead, I often go with a white quartz surface, such as Caesarstone quartz countertop in Frosty Carrina. It has the natural appeal and veining that marble has, but it's a more durable and eco-friendly material.

TT: A natural stone or quartz product is always a great investment. It's really hard to keep a butcher block or laminate countertop looking new.

— **SELECT A PALE PALETTE** —

TT: I tend to lean toward light colours and shades of white, keeping the palette classic and neutral. I know it's cliché, but those pops of colour and touches that add personality to the kitchen should be interchangeable. Potential buyers can look past a lime-green toaster, but they might not be as forgiving about a lime-green backsplash.

JH: I'm also a big fan of white. But if you do want colour, my best advice is to take both the value and the saturation down a few notches. Pick a paint colour that's three shades more muted and two shades lighter than the colour you think you want. Sometimes people are worried that a white or muted colour will be boring, but what's worse is choosing the wrong colour of wood cabinetry. Nothing's more terrible than really orange- or yellow-toned wood cabinets against a contrasting floor colour.



Are you itchin' for a sky-blue kitchen? Following Harris's paint-selection formula, you might be better off with pale powdery-blue walls instead. Paint chips, benjaminmoore.ca.

— **ADD EFFICIENT STORAGE** —

JH: I have open shelving because I love to collect and display vintage items. It adds personality to the space, but it only works if you're the kind of person who can keep things tidy, and if you have enough closed storage space elsewhere.

TT: With a young family, I don't have time to make sure the glasses are displayed nicely. I prefer roll-out cupboard drawers and pull-out pantries. I wouldn't mind one open shelf to showcase my grandmother's tea sets, but I'd need Jillian to come over and display them for me! ●

For more makeover magic, catch Jillian Harris and Todd Talbot on "Love It or List It Vancouver" (wnetwork.com).

KITCHEN CRIMES ACCORDING TO DESIGNER JILLIAN HARRIS, THESE ARE THE THREE MOST COMMON DESIGN OFFENCES.

1 NOT TAKING CUPBOARDS TO THE CEILING
"Leaving space above upper cabinets is my biggest pet peeve," says Harris. "People end up sticking things like fake ferns and canisters up there, and they get dusty and filmy with grease." Esthetics aside, it's a waste of potential storage space.

2 GRANITE COUNTERTOPS
Although the house hunters on other real-estate TV shows always go gaga over granite, Harris isn't buying the hype. "Granite countertops make a kitchen look messy. They're also overpriced, and I don't think you get a good return on your investment," she says.

3 ADDING AN OFFICE NICHE
Sure, the kitchen is the command centre of your home, but that doesn't mean you need to carve a designated workstation out of a corner. "No one ever grabs a seat at those little office niches in the kitchen," says Harris. "They just end up being a dumping ground for mail, keys and junk."