

If you are planning a kitchen or bath remodel in Los Angeles, you quickly run into the same tangle of questions: Who does what, who coordinates whom, and who is actually responsible for your countertops? Many homeowners assume the cabinet maker handles everything, then discover partway through the job that they still need a stone fabricator, a tile installer, or a separate contractor for demolition.

The short answer is that some cabinet makers in Los Angeles do countertops, some never touch them, and many sit in the middle, coordinating with separate trades. The right setup for you depends on what kind of countertops you want, how custom your cabinets are, and how much you value a single point of responsibility.

The longer answer is where things get interesting.

What a cabinet maker actually does

It helps to clear up some vocabulary first.

A cabinet maker is a specialist in built-in storage and millwork. Their core work includes:

Custom kitchen and bath cabinets. Wall units, media centers, mudroom built-ins, closets, office storage. Sometimes matching furniture, like banquettes, bookshelves, or a one-off table that lines up with the cabinetry.

If you walk into a high end Los Angeles kitchen and the cabinets fit perfectly to the ceiling, panels align with the fridge, and the island proportions feel “right”, a cabinet maker had a hand in that.

A lot of homeowners ask, what is the difference between a carpenter and a cabinet maker? In practice the lines can blur, but in most projects:

A carpenter handles framing, rough work, and broader finish carpentry such as doors, baseboards, window trim, and sometimes simple built-ins. A cabinet maker focuses on precision box construction, doors, drawers, hardware, and finishing. On a complex kitchen, the cabinet maker is closer to a furniture maker than a framer.

Many small shops in Los Angeles wear both hats, especially on modest remodels. On larger or more detailed jobs, the carpenter and cabinet maker are separate trades, often with a general contractor coordinating.

Within their own niche, what does a cabinet maker do day to day?

They measure the space, engineer the layout, choose materials and hardware, fabricate the boxes and doors, finish them, and install the cabinets on site. On a fully custom job, they also solve oddities, like out-of-plumb walls in a 1920s Spanish or ductwork that steals three inches from the back of a pantry.

Some shops stop at “boxes in place” and let someone else hang doors or set hardware. Better shops deliver a complete package and walk the job with you when it is done.

Where countertops fit in

This is the heart of the question: do cabinet makers also do countertops?

In Los Angeles, you typically see four different arrangements.

First, some cabinet makers fabricate and install certain types of countertops in-house. This is more common with laminate tops, butcher block, and occasionally solid surface materials like Corian. If your project uses these, you can often have one shop handle both cabinets and counters.

Second, many cabinet makers partner with stone fabricators for materials like quartz, porcelain slab, quartzite, marble, and granite. In these setups, the cabinet maker builds and installs the cabinets, then the stone shop comes in to template, fabricate, and install the countertops. You might write one contract with the cabinet company, and they subcontract the stone, or you might have two separate contracts and simply rely on the cabinet maker to coordinate timing and details.

Third, some high end cabinetry studios act more like kitchen design firms, pulling together cabinets, countertops, backsplash, and sometimes appliances. They may not own a stone shop, but they have long term relationships and consistent standards with one or two fabricators. This is common in luxury neighborhoods like Brentwood, Pacific Palisades, and parts of the Hollywood Hills, where clients want a single point of responsibility.

Fourth, there are pure cabinet shops that do not touch countertops at all. They will happily coordinate measurements and give you drawings, but they leave slab selection, fabrication, and installation entirely to you and your chosen stone company.

So when you ask, do cabinet makers also do countertops, the accurate answer is: some do, some coordinate, some avoid. Clarifying which category your prospective shop falls into is one of the first conversations you should have.

Types of countertops a cabinet maker might handle

The likelihood that a cabinet maker will handle your tops depends heavily on the material.

Laminate tops are often made by cabinet makers, especially for rental units, ADUs, garages, and budget projects. These are relatively easy to cut, seam, and edge in a woodworking shop.

Wood and butcher block countertops can also be a natural extension of cabinet work. A capable cabinet maker knows how to orient grain, allow for seasonal movement, and apply durable finishes. If you want a walnut island top with a waterfall edge, this is often done by the same shop that built the cabinets.

Solid surface materials like Corian or similar products sit somewhere in between. Some cabinet shops in Los Angeles are certified to fabricate these, others outsource them to specialty fabricators.

Stone and quartz slabs are a different world. They require different equipment, safety practices, and installation methods. Most cabinet makers in Los Angeles do not cut stone in-house. They work with fabricators that have bridge saws, CNC routers, polishers, and appropriate handling gear. Even if your cabinet company “includes” countertops, stone is almost always fabricated by a specialized shop behind the scenes.

Tile countertops are uncommon in new L.A. Kitchens, but you still see them in some historic restorations and Spanish style homes. In those cases, a tile installer usually takes the lead once the cabinets are in and the plywood substrate is down.

If you are hoping to have a single company handle everything, that is most realistic if your tops are laminate, wood, or solid surface. Once you move into stone, quartz, or porcelain, you are usually dealing with at least two businesses, even if you only see one logo on the invoice.

How cabinets and countertops interact during a remodel

Countertops do not float in midair. They rely entirely on the cabinet layout and installation quality. This is where a good cabinet maker earns their fee.

Counters must sit on a flat, level, and properly supported surface. If your cabinets are out of level by more than a small tolerance, the stone fabricator has to fight the room. You end up with shims, thick beads of adhesive, or

unsightly caulking to cover gaps against walls.

For this reason, most reputable stone shops refuse to template until the cabinets are installed, leveled, and anchored. That adds a time gap to your project that many homeowners do not anticipate.

In a typical Los Angeles kitchen project, the sequence looks like this, even though every job has its quirks:

Demolition and rough work, plumbing and electrical changes, floor prep and flooring, then cabinet installation, then countertop templating and fabrication, then countertop installation, then backsplash and final plumbing hookup.

The key detail is that countertop templating happens after cabinet installation. Fabrication usually takes 7 to 14 calendar days for stone or quartz in a normal workload, sometimes longer if you have complex mitered edges, special cutouts, or a very busy fabricator.

This means that even if your cabinet maker “does” countertops, you should expect a dead period of a week or two between the cabinets going in and the counters being installed. During that gap, the kitchen is half usable at best.

Understanding this timing upfront helps you plan temporary cooking arrangements and manage expectations with the rest of the household.

Costs in Los Angeles: cabinets, countertops, and the gray area between

Once you start asking around, you will quickly find there is no one answer to how much does a custom cabinet maker cost. The spread is huge, especially in Los Angeles where labor, rent, and insurance are all high.

For a medium sized kitchen with custom cabinets built by a local shop, you might see numbers like these, as of the mid 2020s:

Custom cabinets only: roughly \$800 to \$1,500 per linear foot of cabinetry, installed, for a typical mid to upper mid level shop. High end studios with elaborate finishes, inset doors, and design services can go above that.

Custom kitchen cabinets cost in Los Angeles can easily range from \$25,000 on the conservative end for a small kitchen with straightforward finishes, up to \$80,000 or more in larger or luxury homes. It is not unusual to see six figure cabinetry packages in high end Beverly Hills or Bel Air projects when the kitchen, pantry, mudroom, and multiple bathrooms are included.

How much should you pay for custom cabinets? The honest answer is that you get what you pay for in a few specific areas: material quality, hardware, finish durability, fit and alignment, and aftercare. If a bid looks dramatically below the rest, something is usually missing, whether that is plywood backs, soft close hardware, a decent finish system, or proper installation time.

Countertop pricing is just as variable. Quartz and mid range stone tops in Los Angeles often run \$70 to \$130 per square foot installed, depending on the material, thickness, edge profile, cutouts, and the fabricator’s overhead. Exotic stones and porcelain slabs can go higher.

When a cabinet maker packages countertops with their work, you are often paying close to the same underlying stone rates, plus a coordination margin. That margin is not necessarily a bad thing. It covers their time managing another trade, protecting your schedule, and taking responsibility if something does not align.

This ties into a broader question many people ask: is it cheaper to buy cabinets or have them made? When you factor in the full picture - modifications to stock cabinets, fillers, panels, extra trim, and labor to make it “look custom” - a well scoped custom cabinet package can be closer in price than you expect. Big box stock cabinets feel cheaper at first glance, but once you adjust for quality and fit, it is not always a straightforward win.

Custom, semi-custom, and stock: what actually changes

A lot of advertising language gets thrown around, so it helps to pin down what is the difference between custom and semi-custom cabinets.

Stock cabinets come in fixed sizes, colors, and configurations, usually in 3 inch width increments. You work with what exists, fill gaps with spacers or panels, and accept some compromises in fit. They are usually made in large factories using particleboard or lower grade plywood, with a limited range of door styles and colors.

Semi-custom cabinets start with a stock line but give you more flexibility in widths, depths, and some finish or modification options. You might be able to adjust cabinet width by an inch or two, change interior accessories, or choose from more door styles and colors. Construction quality can be perfectly respectable, but you are still confined to a catalog.

True custom cabinets are built to the exact size your room needs, with almost no limitation on layout, materials, door styles, or finishes. The shop draws your kitchen, cuts sheets to fit, and builds each box to order. In Los Angeles, many of the better small to mid sized shops work this way.

Are custom cabinets better than stock cabinets? In terms of fit, longevity, and design freedom, yes, usually. Are custom cabinets worth the money? For most owners planning to stay in the home at least several years, the benefits in daily use and resale value are real. But there are scenarios where stock or semi-custom makes more sense, such as short term rentals, flips, or tight budgets.

A practical middle ground is semi-custom for perimeter cabinets and a custom island or special pieces where you need that extra flexibility. Not every inch of your kitchen has to be ultra custom to feel high end.

Why custom cabinets cost what they do

Many people encounter sticker shock and immediately ask: why are custom cabinets so expensive?

Several realities drive the price. First, Los Angeles shop rates. A decent cabinet maker, after overhead, insurance, taxes, and shop rent, cannot charge handyman prices. Skilled labor is scarce, and the work is time consuming.

Second, materials. What material is best for kitchen cabinets is a long debate, but many high quality shops here use furniture grade plywood boxes with solid wood face frames and doors. With plywood prices, good hardwood, and quality hardware, their raw cost is already significant. Are plywood cabinets better than MDF? Not in every situation, but for box construction in a kitchen that might see moisture and movement, a good veneer core plywood is generally more robust than basic MDF, especially for screw holding and long spans.

Third, the finish system. The best finish for kitchen cabinets in a busy L.A. Home is usually a catalyzed lacquer or conversion varnish sprayed in a controlled environment. That system takes proper equipment, ventilation, and skill. It holds up better than a quick brush-on paint job from a house painter, but it is far more involved.

Fourth, the hidden time: design revisions, shop drawings, site visits, coordinating with electricians, appliance suppliers, and yes, countertop fabricators. Those hours are rarely billed separately but are baked into the overall price.

When you divide a custom cabinetry estimate by the number of hours involved, most reputable shops are not getting rich. They are charging enough to survive and stand behind their work.

Construction details that actually matter

If you want to understand cabinet quality, there are a few practical questions you can ask.

What thickness should custom cabinet wood be? For most face frame cabinets, 3/4 inch plywood for the box sides and shelves is a solid standard. Backs can be thinner if they are properly set into a groove or dado, but many better shops still use at least 1/2 inch backs. Drawers often use 5/8 or 3/4 inch solid wood sides with a 1/4 or 3/8 inch plywood bottom, captured in grooves.

Framed or frameless cabinets is another key choice. Framed cabinets have a face frame at the front, which the doors mount to. Frameless cabinets, also called European style, have no face frame, so doors mount directly to the box. Frameless often gives you slightly more interior space and a very clean, modern look. Framed can feel more traditional and forgiving, especially in older houses with uneven walls. Neither is universally better. What matters is whether the shop is set up to do that chosen system well.

Hardware is another big tell. Soft close, full extension drawer slides from brands like Blum or Salice cost more but transform daily use. Cheap slides and hinges are the first thing you notice wearing out.

How long custom cabinets actually take

Homeowners routinely underestimate timelines. They ask, how long does it take to make custom cabinets, and hope to hear “a couple of weeks.” In reality, for a typical L.A. Shop with other jobs in the pipeline, you are usually looking at 6 to 12 weeks from final approval of drawings and finishes to ready-to-install cabinets.

The range depends on shop size, backlog, complexity, and how decisive you are on design decisions. Changes midway through fabrication are expensive and can add weeks.

How long does a custom kitchen take to install? Pure installation of cabinets, without demolition or other trades, might be 3 to 7 working days for an average-sized kitchen, assuming a seasoned crew. Add another week or two for countertops and backsplash after that, as discussed earlier.

If someone promises full fabrication and installation of a mid sized custom kitchen in three weeks from first meeting, be very cautious. Either they are in a rare lull with a large team ready, or they are overpromising.

Styles, colors, and what works in Los Angeles

Trends matter, especially if you plan to sell within a decade. A common question is, what is the most popular kitchen cabinet style? In much of Los Angeles, the safe, broadly appealing answer is still some variation of Shaker or a clean, flat panel door. In more contemporary neighborhoods and new construction, frameless slab fronts with integrated pulls are increasingly common.

Are white cabinets going out of style? White will cycle a bit, but it has deep staying power, especially in smaller homes and condos where it makes spaces feel larger. Pure bright white is softening into warmer whites and light greiges. A lot of clients now split the room: lighter uppers, with deeper lowers or an island in wood or a saturated color.

If resale matters, what is the best cabinet color for resale value is usually a neutral: white, off-white, light greige, or a warm wood tone that does not scream a particular year. Bold blues or greens can work if they are well executed and in the right house, but they narrow your buyer pool slightly.

Investment, lifespan, and resale impact

Are custom cabinets a good investment? If you are in a typical Los Angeles market where buyers scrutinize kitchens and baths, well built cabinets are one of the few upgrades that materially shifts the perceived value of the home. They photograph well, they hold up to showings, and they signal quality.

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What is the average lifespan of custom cabinets? With decent materials and finishes, 20 to 30 years of daily use is realistic, often more. Hardware may need updating sooner, and finishes can be refreshed, but the underlying boxes and frames should stay solid. By contrast, very low end stock cabinets can show fatigue in under 10 years in a busy family kitchen.

Do custom cabinets add value to a home? Appraisers will not itemize them, but modern, well designed cabinetry supports a higher overall kitchen and bath value, which drives listing price and saleability. For many of my past clients, the real payoff came at resale, when buyers walked the house and mentally sorted it into "move-in ready" instead of "project house."

At the extreme, what are the most expensive kitchen cabinets? Fully bespoke European systems, [Kitchen Remodeling Services In Los Angeles bradcoKitchen.com](https://bradcoKitchen.com) exotic veneers, hand applied specialty finishes, and integrated lighting can push cabinetry into the six figure range for the kitchen alone. That level is rare, but it exists in top-tier homes.

On the other end, what is the cheapest way to get custom cabinets? Often it is to simplify. Choose a straightforward door style, limit internal accessories, keep finishes within a standard palette, and minimize odd angles or radius work. Sometimes you can use a reputable semi-custom line for most of the room and reserve true custom only where you genuinely need it.

Some custom cabinet makers in Los Angeles do offer financing, either directly or via partners like GreenSky or other home improvement lenders. Always ask about rates and read the fine print. If you see a very low interest promotion, it is often subsidized by slightly higher pricing on the work itself.

As for what is the markup on custom cabinets, it varies wildly. Shops have to cover fixed costs and maintain a buffer for warranty work. A 30 to 50 percent gross margin is not unusual, which sounds high until you tally labor,

rent, insurance, taxes, tools, and downtime between projects. Ultra-low bids either cut that margin unsafely or are banking on change orders later.

Refinishing, refacing, or replacing

Not every kitchen needs new boxes. Many Los Angeles homes have solid mid century or 80s era plywood cabinets with outdated doors and finishes. This is where the questions “Is it cheaper to refinish or replace kitchen cabinets?” and “Is cabinet refacing worth it?” come up.

Refinishing means keeping your existing doors and boxes, but stripping, sanding, and repainting or restaining them. If the underlying wood is in good shape and the layout works, this can be far cheaper than new cabinets. It is labor intensive, though, and results depend heavily on the painter’s skill.

Refacing means leaving the boxes in place, but replacing the doors and drawer fronts and applying new veneer to exposed box faces. You essentially give the kitchen a new outer skin. How much does it cost to reface kitchen cabinets? In Los Angeles, ranges typically run from around \$8,000 for a small, straightforward kitchen up to \$20,000 or more for larger, more complex spaces. It usually comes in below full replacement, especially when you factor in that you avoid major demolition, countertop removal, and potential permitting issues.

Refacing is worth it when the layout works, the boxes are solid, and you want a fairly fast aesthetic upgrade without diving into a full remodel. It is less attractive if you plan to move walls, change appliances, or add significant storage.

Bathrooms, vanities, and even furniture

Most cabinet makers do more than kitchens. Do cabinet makers do bathroom vanities? In almost every shop I know, yes. Vanities, medicine cabinets, linen towers, and built-in shelving are all part of their regular work. This is especially useful when you want your bath cabinetry to coordinate with the kitchen or with other millwork in the home.

Can a cabinet maker make furniture? Many can, and some started as furniture makers before moving into built-ins. If you need a window seat, a custom dining bench that lines up with an island, or a media unit that wraps around a fireplace, a good cabinet shop is often the right call. Freestanding dining tables or chairs are more of a specialty, but some shops welcome that work.

How to choose a cabinet maker in Los Angeles

With so many options, how do you find a good cabinet maker, and how do you know if a cabinet maker is good, beyond attractive photos on a website?

Here is a focused list of questions you can ask during your initial conversations:

- Where are your cabinets actually built, and can I see the shop?
- What materials do you use for boxes, backs, shelves, and doors?
- What finish system do you use, and how is it applied?
- Who installs the cabinets, and are they your employees or subcontractors?
- How do you typically handle countertops - in-house, as a subcontract, or by coordination only?

The way they answer often tells you as much as the content. Clear, direct explanations, with examples, beat buzzwords every time.

Beyond questions, pay attention to how they measure and provide drawings. How do I measure for custom cabinets is a valid concern, but on any serious job, you should not be left to do that alone with a tape measure. A professional cabinet maker or their installer should visit the site, take careful measurements, and eventually produce shop drawings or at least detailed layouts. If someone is ready to start fabrication off your rough sketch, be wary.

You might also ask what should I look for in a cabinet maker in terms of process. Look for a structured path from design, to drawings, to approvals, to fabrication, to installation, with checkpoints where you can catch misunderstandings early. Ask how they handle inevitable surprises in older L.A. Homes, such as crooked walls or off-square corners.

Working with a cabinet maker who also handles countertops

If you decide you want your cabinet maker to handle countertops as well, there are a few practical things to clarify.

Firstly, which materials are they comfortable with? If they directly fabricate laminate or wood, ask to see examples, including seams and inside corners. If they coordinate stone, ask which fabricators they work with and whether you can visit the slab yard or shop.

Secondly, how are responsibilities divided if something does not align? For example, if the countertop overhang is uneven or a sink cutout feels off, will you be calling the cabinet company, the stone shop, or a general contractor? Single point responsibility is worth a lot of sanity during a remodel.

Thirdly, timing. Ask them to walk you through the timeline from final cabinet drawings to countertop install, including any typical delays. Good shops in Los Angeles know how their preferred fabricators schedule and can set realistic dates.

Finally, what happens if you change your mind on materials midstream. Switching from, say, a lighter quartz to a heavy natural stone can change support requirements and lead times. You want a team that gives you honest feedback on that, not one that nods yes to everything.

After installation: modifications and future flexibility

Once the kitchen is in, many owners wonder, can custom cabinets be modified after installation? To a degree, yes. A skilled cabinet maker can retroactively add pull outs, dividers, and sometimes even new drawers where there were fixed shelves. They can also adjust doors, replace fronts, or build new pieces to match.

Major layout changes are more painful. Moving a large pantry cabinet or island can snowball into floor patching, countertop replacement, or electrical and plumbing rework. It is possible, but it is closer to a mini remodel than a tweak.

If you know your needs may evolve, talk about that upfront. Sometimes small design choices, like using separate cabinets instead of one oversized unit, make future changes far easier.

If there is one through line across all of this, it is that cabinetry and countertops are deeply intertwined, but not always handled by the same hands. In Los Angeles, a good cabinet maker will be honest with you about where their responsibility ends, which fabricators they trust, and how the pieces of your project fit together. When you find that level of clarity, the whole remodel runs smoother, and the result feels like it was always meant to be there.

