



CABINET MAKERS ASSOCIATION

CABINETS BUYER'S GUIDE

BENEFITS OF WORKING WITH A CUSTOM CABINETMAKER

As a homeowner (or a designer, architect, or contractor), you have several options before you when it comes time to purchase cabinetry for your home or project. Before you rush out to the nearest cabinetry dealer or big box store, take a moment and look at the advantages that can be offered from a custom cabinetmaker.

Customer Service

When you contact a custom cabinetmaker, the person that answers the phone is usually the person you will deal with throughout the project. That is because most custom cabinet shops are relatively small companies with less than 10 employees. Sometimes the person that answers the phone is the clerk, salesperson, advertising agent, design assistant, shop draftsman, drawing detailer, purchasing agent, craftsman, installer, and finisher all wrapped into one. These types of shops normally have only one or two people in the office and skilled crafts people working away at making every cabinet to meet the specifications within the design.

Larger custom shops will assign you a project manager to handle your needs. Whether it is the shop owner or the project manager, the one person you are talking with has the knowledge and experience to follow the project through from beginning to end. That person will handle everything from offering design choices to final payment.



Contrast that with the big box store, where, depending on the time of day or day of the week, the person you need to talk with may not be available. If there are any problems or questions, you may have to deal with two or three people to finally get to the person that will be able to help you. Then you have to rely on the salesperson to order all the parts needed for your project the first time, and hope that there is no mismatching of finishes due to different run dates or dye lots. Or even worse when you find out the cabinet or component that you need to complete your project either arrived damaged or was incorrectly sized to work in your project. Can you imagine the inconvenience and problems of waiting weeks to get the right sized product delivered when your project is already under construction in your home? You won't find that kind of problem if you deal with a local cabinet shop who makes the all the parts necessary to complete your project on time and on budget.

In custom cabinet shops there are no middlemen to worry about passing through information and money. Regardless of the shop size, dealing with one person greatly reduces the chances of mishandling information and virtually eliminates miscommunication.

Customer Service

Because the custom cabinet shop has many options to offer, the pricing schedule is variable as well, and will meet varying budgets. Many custom shops are very competitive with stock cabinet pricing. As for payments, most shops offer a tiered payment plan consisting of a down payment and scheduled progress payment along different points within the design/construction/finishing/installation period. With today's technologies being made more available to small woodworking business, photo realistic computer design drawings, e-mail communications and online ordering as well as credit card transactions are available at more and more cabinet shops.

Environmental Impact

Another benefit to using local custom cabinetmakers is the environmental footprint is much smaller than using a stock cabinet supplier. Consider the fact that the local cabinetmaker does not necessarily need to package each cabinet individually as do stock suppliers shipping cabinets from distant warehouses or factories. This reduces the need for cardboard and petroleum for shipping products great distances. Cabinets normally are delivered with reusable shipping quilts wrapped around the finished product. Most cabinet shops sell to and deliver within a relatively small area near their shop.



Therefore the use of transportation fuel and wear and tear on trucking products long distances is greatly reduced, therefore reducing the carbon footprint of transportation to very small percentage of warehouse provided cabinetry.

Also, custom cabinetmakers have options to use formaldehyde-free products in the construction of the cabinetry.

Custom shops also have the ability to use water-based products in the stains, paints, and clear coats used on cabinetry. This has a huge impact on greatly lowering the use of solvents that would otherwise contaminate the land. Custom cabinetmakers can provide materials that are FSC (Forest Service Council) Certified. This means that the wood products used in the construction of your cabinetry is certified to come from a source that guarantees the replacement of the trees cut to make the products in your cabinets. This promotes and guarantees that wood products will be available for years by renewing the forest from where they came. Some custom cabinet shops are now certified as Green manufacturers. This means that all the products used in their cabinetry has the lowest environmental impact available.

Design Process

Working with custom shops gives you complete flexibility in design, material choices, and finish options. Most cabinet shops have the ability to work within parameters offered by an outside designer or they can assist you with a custom design based on their experiences and your desires. The custom cabinet shop can offer suggestions to further enhance an existing design and provide a better overall cabinet purchase.

During the design process, the custom cabinetmaker can offer advice on the best choices of materials for the job. Case construction (the cabinet box itself is called a case) can be made from either low pressure laminate, like melamine or veneer core plywood, or any number of other types of sheet goods. In European style, construction the edge of the case can be covered with either a composite or wood veneer edge band. In face frame construction (face frame has a frame around the front or face of the case), the face material is usually finish grade solid hardwood. Finish grade hardwoods are typically finished with a stain, and then coated with a clear finish coat.

Some cabinets are not finished with a traditional stain and clear coat, but rather are painted or dyed to meet individual tastes and styles, while others may have a high pressure composite material like Formica applied to the case and/or door. Hinges are available in different grades and styles. Drawer boxes can be made from several different materials and assembled using different methods, and can be fitted with custom dividers or even double decked to maximize available storage space. Options are available in drawer slide hardware for extra heavy drawers, for full pull out capabilities and for soft "no slam" self closing.

There is a huge selection of storage solutions available today ranging from sink trays to corner cabinet solutions to spice rack pull-outs to custom dividers and pull downs. The experienced cabinetmaker can show you how to maximize the storage potential of your job.

The outside of your cabinetry is also an important consideration. A custom shop can create doors and drawer fronts from nearly any species of wood, either domestic or imported, and can also offer hundreds of different shapes and styles.

Equally important are some of the accessories that can be incorporated into your project.

Whether you want your look to include carvings, rosettes, corbels, columns, flutes, reeds, onlays, moldings or just about anything else to personalize your project into your one of a kind dream, a custom shop can provide you with many choices and incorporate them into a design that is exactly what you want.

Custom cabinetry can be constructed to maximize all the space in a given area. Pre-manufactured cabinetry relies on fillers to overcome the left over space from using stock sizes. These fillers can virtually be eliminated by your custom cabinetmaker, yielding many more cubic inches of usable storage in the same sized space. Custom lengths, depths, and heights can be created to fit the situation within your home. If you have accessibility needs or special requirements for elderly or disabled persons, the custom cabinetmaker can provide cabinetry custom fit to meet those needs.

The custom cabinet shop can offer custom finishes to many design styles to meet your preferences. The professional cabinetmaker has access to professional products to offer you a finish that is beautiful, practical, and durable to today's cleaning agents. Whether you are looking for a traditional stain and clear coat finish, a high gloss solid color, an antique hand-painted look or nearly anything in between, a custom cabinet shop can help you get the exact finish you seek. Make sure you discuss the maintenance issues of the different type of finishes available.

Final Thoughts

As you travel through the process of purchasing cabinetry for your project, please take time to consider all the choices available. Cabinetry projects have many details and options available to fit the space, have the appropriate look, and fit one's budget. Dealing with a local cabinet shop can offer you all the advantages of getting exactly the style and look you are seeking within your budget, while working closely with a local trusted expert adviser who truly has your best interests at heart. After all, the choice you make today could last a lifetime if you choose the right products, the right style, and the right custom cabinetmaker.

