

A FREE GUIDE · TESI DESIGN

The Charlotte Kitchen Planning Guide

What it really costs, how long it takes, and the 7 most expensive mistakes to avoid.

Tesi Design

KITCHEN DESIGN & REMODELING · CHARLOTTE, NC

BEFORE YOU SPEND A DOLLAR

Spend an hour here first.

If you’re planning a kitchen, you’ve probably got a Pinterest board a mile long and a knot in your stomach about the cost. That’s normal. A kitchen is the most expensive, most-used, most-judged room in your house, and the decisions are easy to get wrong and expensive to undo. This guide gives you the real numbers, the real timeline, and the mistakes we watch homeowners make again and again, so whatever you decide, you decide it with your eyes open.

Part 1 — What a Charlotte kitchen really costs

PROJECT LEVEL	TYPICAL INVESTMENT	WHAT IT INCLUDES
Refresh	\$25,000–\$50,000	Counters, backsplash, hardware, paint, lighting; existing layout stays
Full renovation	\$50,000–\$100,000	New cabinetry, counters, appliances, flooring; same footprint
Custom / luxury	\$100,000–\$250,000+	Layout changes, custom cabinetry, premium finishes, designer-led

Most designer-led kitchens in the Charlotte area land in the \$75,000–\$200,000+ range. Cabinetry is usually the largest line (30–40%). Add a 10–20% contingency, and expect roughly 50–75% resale return.

Part 2 — How long it really takes

PHASE	TIME	WHAT’S HAPPENING
Design & planning	4–8 weeks	Layout, selections, 3D renderings, final plan + budget
Ordering & lead times	6–12 weeks	Cabinets especially; overlaps planning
Construction	6–12 weeks	Demo, rough-in, install, finishes
Total to reveal	3–6 months	Longer for full custom or structural changes

The biggest schedule killer: starting demo before materials arrive. A good plan orders first and demos second.

Part 3 — Is a kitchen designer worth it?

On a small refresh, maybe not. On a six-figure renovation, a designer is the cheapest insurance you can buy. A contractor builds what's in front of them; a designer makes sure what's in front of them is right, before it's framed, plumbed, and impossible to change. Designer fees typically run a flat \$4,500–\$15,000+, or 10–20% of the project. On a \$120,000 kitchen, that fee is the difference between a kitchen you tolerate and one you're proud of for 20 years.

Part 4 — The 7 most expensive mistakes

1. **Shopping before you have a plan.** Plan the kitchen, then choose the cabinets.
2. **Budgeting with no contingency.** Add 10–20%. The surprise is always behind the wall.
3. **Designing for the photo, not your life.** Start from how you actually cook and host.
4. **Chasing trends that date fast.** Anchor in timeless; let trends live in cheap-to-change things.
5. **Splurging where it doesn't show, skimping where it does.** Spend on what you touch daily.
6. **Hiring a builder with no designer.** If no one owns the look, the look is an accident.
7. **Demoing before materials arrive.** Order first. Live in your kitchen until the truck shows up.

Part 5 — Your planning checklist

- Set a budget range and add a 10–20% contingency
- List must-haves vs. nice-to-haves
- Note how you actually use the kitchen
- Gather inspiration, and note what you dislike too
- Decide your path: designer-led or self-managed
- If hiring help, vet for a real portfolio, recent reviews, and one accountable person
- Expect 3–6 months; order materials before demo

WHEN YOU'RE READY

Don't gamble six figures on the most important room in your home.

Virginia Tesi is a fashion-trained designer (FIT, 20+ years, ASID & NKBA) who turns your ideas into a buildable, magazine-worthy plan and stays in charge until it's done right. Start with a Kitchen Design Discovery, a \$350 consultation credited toward your design package.

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