

If you live in Los Angeles, cabinet refacing sits in that tempting sweet spot: a “new” kitchen without tearing your house apart or writing a six-figure check. You see the before and after shots, read the promise of “half the cost of new cabinets,” and it feels like an easy yes.

I refaced my first set of cabinets in a Hancock Park kitchen almost 20 years ago. The client was meticulous, the budget healthy, the contractor polished. Even in that ideal situation, we hit costs that were never mentioned in the original quote. Since then, I have yet to see a refacing project in Los Angeles that did not uncover at least one significant surprise.

Refacing can be worth it. It can also quietly drift into the territory where you would have been smarter just replacing your cabinets or rethinking the entire kitchen. The difference is understanding the hidden costs before you sign.

What Cabinet Refacing Really Includes - And What It Quietly Ignores

On paper, cabinet refacing is simple. The contractor keeps your existing cabinet boxes, removes your doors and drawer fronts, skins the exposed surfaces with a veneer or laminate, and installs new doors, drawer fronts, and hardware.

That core scope usually covers:

- New doors and drawer fronts, often solid wood or MDF with veneer
- Veneer or laminate over exposed cabinet face frames and ends
- New hinges and basic hardware
- Basic trim adjustments so everything looks finished

Everything else tends to live in the land of “extra” or “we can quote that once we open things up.”

In Los Angeles, where many kitchens are 20 to 50 years old and cabinets have survived earthquakes, slow leaks, and a few owners’ DIY experiments, those extras add up fast.

The Biggest Hidden Costs In Cabinet Refacing Los Angeles Homeowners Miss

Over time I have noticed the same categories popping up again and again, regardless of neighborhood or price point.

1. Structural Problems With Existing Boxes

Refacing assumes one thing: your cabinet boxes are sound. The whole value proposition cracks if they are not.

Here is where the surprises typically show up:

Hairline water damage from old leaks:

Think of the sink base that has been wet on and off for a decade, or the dishwasher that was replaced after it ruined the side of the adjacent cabinet. To the eye, the boxes just look “old.” Once the doors are off, the crew sees swollen particleboard or mold. That box is not a candidate for refacing. It needs replacement or serious repair, and that is an extra cost.

Out-of-square or sagging boxes:

I see this a lot in older Spanish and midcentury homes. Houses settle, floors slope, and cabinets follow. When a contractor installs perfectly straight, crisp new doors on a crooked box, you get uneven reveals and doors that rub. Fixing this often means shimming, rebuilding parts of the box, and adjusting or replacing drawer slides. None of that is free.

Thin or low-quality original construction:

Track homes from the late 80s and 90s in the Valley and parts of Orange County are infamous for flimsy cabinet boxes made from low grade particleboard. Technically they can be refaced, but you are dressing up a structure that may not last another decade. Many high end refacing firms will quietly add reinforcing, new backs, or additional supports. Those hours show up on the invoice even if they were not in your original mental budget.

When people ask "Is it worth it to reface cabinets?" I always start with this: if the boxes are compromised, no, it usually is not. You will be spending good money over bad.

2. Layout Changes That Look Small But Cost Big

Most refacing quotes assume you are not changing your layout. The marketing language talks about "new kitchen look without the mess of a remodel." Then the design conversation starts, and the wish list creeps in.

"Can we turn this one cabinet into a trash pull out?"

"Could we add a vertical tray divider here?" "That corner is wasted; can we do a lazy susan?"

Each change seems minor. Collectively, they can blow your budget.

Any modification that alters the interior structure of the cabinet box usually moves the work from simple refacing into partial remodeling. That requires:

Carpentry to rebuild or modify the box

New hardware like pull out systems or soft close mechanisms Additional veneer to cover new exposed areas

Longer labor hours for layout, fitting, and adjustment

None of that is included in the basic "per linear foot" price you saw in the flyer.

3. The Finish Level Nobody Mentions

There is an enormous difference between entry level refacing and the sort of finish most luxury Los Angeles homeowners actually want.

A lower cost refacing job might use:

Laminate or thermofoil doors

Basic wood veneer on frames Standard hinges Minimal edge detailing

It can look clean at first, but in five to seven years you start to see delamination on hot zones near ovens, chipping around trash pull outs, and yellowing from UV light.

Higher end refacing can absolutely be worth the investment, but it brings invisible costs:

More expensive materials: real wood doors, thicker veneers, custom finishes

Extra prep work so veneers sit on a perfectly smooth, clean substrate Hand finishing or sprayed finishes that match existing millwork Premium soft close hinges and upgraded drawer boxes

This is why "What is the average cost to reface kitchen cabinets?" is such a slippery question. In Los Angeles, basic refacing can start in the range of roughly \$10,000 to \$15,000 for a modest kitchen, but a high end project in a larger space can very comfortably land in the \$25,000 to \$40,000 range, especially if you factor in all these upgrades.

4. Electrical and Lighting Upgrades

The moment you start touching cabinets in a luxury kitchen, you will notice how outdated the lighting feels. Old puck lights under the uppers, a single fluorescent box above the island, limited outlets. You have likely gotten used to it, but new doors suddenly highlight everything around them.

Running new electrical for:

Under cabinet LED strips

In cabinet lighting for glass uppers Additional outlets or appliance garages

Requires an electrician, permits in many Los Angeles municipalities, patching, and sometimes repainting. None of that is in your refacing quote. Clients are often surprised when an "extra" \$2,000 to \$6,000 appears just for lighting and electrical work that now feels necessary to complement the fresh cabinetry.

5. Countertops, Backsplash, And Floors That No Longer Match

Refacing improves part of the visual field, which makes every dated element around it look worse. Once those new cabinet fronts go in, you may suddenly notice:

The granite that looked "fine" now screams 2003

The busy travertine backsplash that competes with your new clean profiles Orange toned floors that fight with your new cabinet color

You do not have to change them, but most people in higher end neighborhoods do, because the contrast is jarring.

That brings us straight to the broader question I hear constantly: "Is \$30,000 enough for a kitchen remodel?" In Los Angeles, refacing plus new mid range countertops, a simple backsplash, some lighting, and hardware can absolutely consume a \$30,000 budget, especially in a full size kitchen. Once you introduce premium stone, bespoke tile, or high end appliances, \$30,000 begins to feel more like a starting point than a complete budget.

Is Refacing Cabinets Better Than Repainting Or Replacing?

The honest answer is: it depends on your existing cabinets, your expectations, and how long you plan to stay in the home.

Painting vs Refacing

Painting is typically the least expensive way to redo kitchen cabinets if the boxes and doors are in decent shape. The cheapest option is a basic brush and roll with a contractor grade paint, but a quality spray finish by a professional crew is the only version I recommend for a luxury home.

Compared to painting, refacing:

Costs more, sometimes two to three times more, because you are paying for new doors and veneers

Delivers a truer “new cabinet” look, with updated profiles and hardware Allows you to upgrade from slab or arched doors to cleaner shaker or custom styles Can address minor door warping by replacing them entirely

If you are asking “What is cheaper, painting cabinets or refacing?” the answer is almost always painting. If you are asking “Is refacing cabinets better than repainting?” the answer is often yes for higher end properties, but only if the structure is sound and the design is staying put.

Refacing vs Full Replacement

Full replacement is more expensive, more disruptive, and takes longer. But it also:

Lets you correct awkward layouts that have bothered you for years

Allows for deeper drawers, taller uppers, better storage systems, and integrated appliances Fixes code issues, odd soffits, and dead corners properly

For clients who ask “Can I redo my kitchen for \$10,000?” or “Can you redo a kitchen for \$5,000?” in Los Angeles, the realistic answer is that you are talking about cosmetic changes only: maybe paint, hardware, and a light fixture or two. Once you enter refacing or replacement territory, a realistic budget for a kitchen remodel in Southern California is usually at least \$25,000 to \$35,000 for a modest space, and often \$50,000 to \$150,000 for a full renovation in a larger or higher end home.

So is refacing worth it? It is worth considering if:

Your layout works well, your cabinet boxes are solid, and you do not need major electrical or plumbing changes.

You want a visual transformation without demolishing your entire kitchen. You understand up front where the additions will appear, and you budget for them.

How Long Do Refacing Cabinets Last In Real Homes?

Done properly, with quality materials, refaced cabinets can last 15 to 20 years in a typical Los Angeles kitchen. There are caveats.

High heat zones next to ranges and ovens stress veneers and thermofoil doors. Families with young kids are uniquely capable of testing finishes with constant impacts, spills, and “experiments.” Coastal homes face more humidity and UV exposure.

If you are planning to stay in your home for only five to ten years, good refacing can absolutely bridge that period and still look strong when you sell, which helps answer another frequent question: “Does refacing increase home value?” It does not add value in the same way as a full luxury remodel, but it can elevate buyer perception, shorten time on market, and keep your kitchen from being the reason a buyer walks away or demands a steep price reduction.

Design Rules That Actually Matter: 1 3, 3x4, And 60 30 10

Refacing often coincides with a broader desire to refine your kitchen’s proportions and color story. This is where some of those design “rules” you have heard of start to matter.

The 1 3 Rule For Cabinets

Designers use a loose 1 3 rule for cabinets to keep proportions pleasing. It shows up in a few ways:



The ratio between door height and rail or stile width. If your rails are too chunky relative to the door, the kitchen can feel heavy. Too skinny, and it looks cheap.

The relationship between upper cabinets and open shelving or glass fronts. A common pattern is one part open or glass to three parts solid, so the kitchen feels curated but not cluttered.

When refacing, you have a unique chance to correct doors that always felt "off," or to introduce glass or metal framed doors in just the right amount so the room reads high end, not like a display showroom.

The 3x4 Kitchen Rule

Contractors and designers sometimes talk about the 3x4 kitchen rule as a quick way of checking usability. It refers to three primary work zones arranged within a comfortable four step reach: cooking, cleaning, and refrigeration.

Refacing does not move appliances, but it is your moment to reconsider:

Are your frequently used items near the right zones?

Should you add deeper drawers for pots under the cooktop? Would pull outs near the fridge for pantry items make sense?

You cannot fully rework your work triangle without replacing cabinets, but you can align your storage to support the 3x4 logic, which improves how the kitchen lives day to day.

The 60 30 10 Rule For Kitchens

Color is where refacing truly shines, and the 60 30 10 rule is a reliable guideline. It suggests:

60 percent of the room in a dominant color

30 percent in a **Cabinet Refacing Los Angeles Bradco Kitchens** secondary color 10 percent in an accent

Refacing lets you control that 60 percent almost instantly, because cabinets often occupy the majority of the visual field. For example:

Warm white or soft taupe cabinets as the 60 percent

Natural oak or darker island cabinetry for the 30 percent Metallic hardware, lighting, and styling elements for the 10 percent

It is one reason refacing can dramatically change the mood of a kitchen without moving a single wall.

What Cabinet Colors Are Outdated, And Are White Cabinets Out Of Style In 2026?

Color questions come up constantly during refacing consultations. "What cabinet color is outdated?" is usually code for "I do not want to regret this choice in three years."

The big offenders now:

Orange honey oak that peaked in the late 90s

Highly yellow creams paired with busy granite High contrast espresso and stark white combinations that feel too sharp and cold

Are white cabinets out of style in 2026? No. Pure white everything is fading, but white or off white cabinets are still a core of luxury design because they reflect light and play well with natural stone and wood. What is shifting is the character of that white:

Softer, warmer whites instead of blue toned whites

Layering white with wood - for example, white perimeter cabinets with a natural oak island Introducing depth with textured finishes rather than flat, plasticky sheens

The cheapest way to change the color of kitchen cabinets remains paint, but for orange oak and severely dated door styles, refacing gives you a more thorough reset.

The Psychology Of Budget: \$10K, \$15K, \$25K, \$30K, And Reality

Almost every kitchen conversation starts with a number. "Is \$10,000 enough for a new kitchen?" "Can you redo a kitchen for \$15,000?" "Can I remodel my kitchen for \$25,000?" "Is \$30,000 enough for a kitchen remodel?"

Those numbers have very different meanings depending on scope.

Here is how I usually frame it for Los Angeles clients who want a clean, modern, but not wildly extravagant result:

- Around \$5,000 to \$10,000: cosmetic refresh only. Paint existing cabinets, new hardware, maybe swap a faucet and a couple of fixtures. No refacing, no new stone.
- Around \$15,000 to \$25,000: modest refacing in a smaller kitchen, or painting plus new mid range countertops and backsplash. Appliances stay mostly as they are, layout stays put.
- Around \$25,000 to \$40,000: quality refacing in a moderate to larger kitchen, updated countertops, backsplash, some lighting, and perhaps one or two new appliances. This is the sweet spot for many Los Angeles homeowners who want "like new" without full gut.
- Around \$40,000 to \$80,000 and up: full cabinet replacement, layout tweaks, premium materials, and broader mechanical upgrades. Think new floors, new lighting plan, and a real design moment.

The most expensive part of redoing a kitchen is usually cabinetry plus installation, followed closely by stone and appliances. Similarly, the most expensive part of a bathroom remodel tends to be tile and wet area construction, followed by plumbing fixtures and cabinetry.

For a standard 12x12 kitchen in California, a full remodel can easily land in the \$40,000 to \$80,000 range for mid to upper mid finishes, and much higher in luxury properties. A full kitchen remodel cost in California that includes reconfiguring walls, moving plumbing, and high end appliances can cross six figures quickly, especially in Los Angeles where labor and permit costs are high.

Once people see these numbers, the appeal of refacing becomes obvious, which is exactly why it is so important to understand the hidden costs up front.

Are There Hidden Costs In Refacing? A Quick Reality Checklist

Before you sign with any Cabinet Refacing Los Angeles company, walk through your kitchen and ask a few focused questions.

- Are there any signs of water damage, previous leaks, or sagging cabinet floors, especially under the sink and around the dishwasher?
- Do you plan to change appliances, add a hood, or move anything within the next five years that would affect surrounding cabinets?
- Are you truly willing to keep your current layout, or are you already thinking about adding a pantry cabinet, extending the uppers, or changing an island?
- Will existing counters, backsplash, and flooring still feel intentional once the cabinets are updated, or will they suddenly look tired next to fresh doors and hardware?
- Do you have adequate lighting, or have you secretly hated your under cabinet shadows for years?

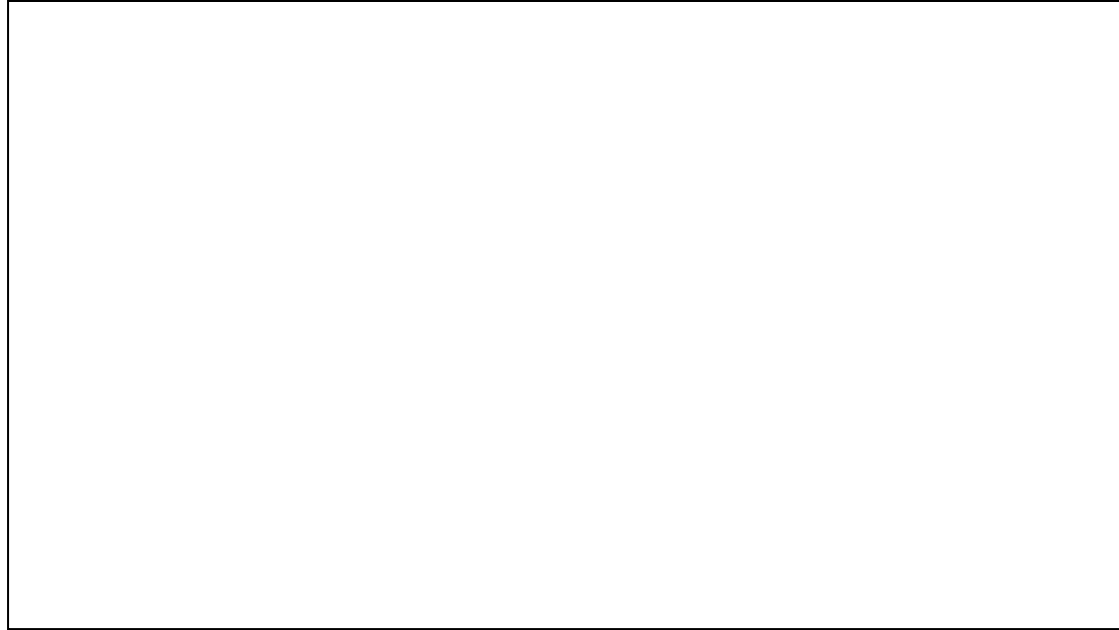
The more “yes” answers you give, the more your refacing project will behave like a light remodel in terms of cost and complexity.

Home Depot, Big Box Solutions, And Where They Fit

People often ask, “Does Home Depot resurface kitchen cabinets?” and “Does Home Depot offer free kitchen design?” Large retailers do offer cabinet refacing programs and entry level design services, and they can work well for certain situations:

Smaller kitchens with straightforward layouts

Owners planning to sell within a few years and wanting a clean, neutral update Investment properties that need to photograph well but not perform like a fully bespoke kitchen



You will usually get standardized products, limited door styles, and set color options. It is budget friendly and predictable, but not tailored. For a high end Los Angeles home where you care about proportion, grain direction, integrated inserts, and long term durability, a dedicated refacing or millwork firm typically provides a better result.

What Makes A Kitchen Look Cheap, Even After Refacing?

I have walked into refaced kitchens where the homeowner clearly spent money, yet the room still reads "builder grade." The missteps are consistent:

Too glossy finishes that reflect every light like plastic

Overly trendy door profiles that will timestamp the kitchen in five years
Tiny, underscaled hardware that looks like an afterthought
Crowded upper cabinets that go to the ceiling but lack proportion or crown detail
Ignoring the rest of the space - dated barstools, old pendants, or cluttered styling that fights with the new cabinets

How do you give your kitchen a cheap makeover that still feels elevated? Focus on a few surgical moves: paint or reface cabinets in a sophisticated neutral, choose substantial hardware, simplify the backsplash, and upgrade one statement light fixture. You do not have to overhaul everything to move the room up a level.

Timing Your Project: Best Time Of Year To Renovate

In Southern California, there is no snow season to work around, but there are still better and worse times to schedule a refacing or remodel.

Contractors are often busiest in late spring and early summer when everyone wants work done before hosting or travel. If you are flexible, late summer and early fall can bring shorter lead times. Around the holidays, you get two competing pressures: crews juggling multiple "must be done by Thanksgiving" projects, and homeowners hosting family.

I tell clients: book early, and if you want more attention from your crew, target shoulder seasons. Your project will feel less rushed, and you may get better pricing on materials as suppliers run promotions.

The Quiet Upside: When Refacing Is Absolutely The Right Move

After all of these warnings, it might sound like I am anti refacing. I am not. I am against refacing sold as a magic trick that erases all other realities.

Refacing is powerful when:

Your boxes are structurally sound

Your layout works You want to modernize the look, not reinvent the room You understand that some electrical, hardware, or minor carpentry upgrades are part of creating a truly finished result

In those conditions, refacing can give you a kitchen that feels aligned with a luxury Los Angeles home without the dust clouds, months of displacement, and six figure contractor bids.

The key is clarity. Ask blunt questions about what is not included. Press for line item estimates on potential extras. Walk the space with your contractor and talk openly about everything you secretly want, even if you think you will "add it later." The more you put on the table now, the fewer painful surprises you will face when the cabinet doors come off and the real work begins.

Bradco Kitchens

8455 Beverly Blvd #305, Los Angeles, CA 90048

03233104049