



Kitchen Makeovers for Downsizing Couples

Downsizing from the family home is exciting. But the kitchen? That's often the hard part. You want a smaller space that still works, not a downgrade. That's where kitchen makeovers come in, giving you a space sized for just the two of you.

We're The Kitchen Design Centre, a Melbourne team that designs and builds bespoke kitchens in house. Our guide draws on that work, so the kitchen you plan suits the smaller home you're moving into, not a flat-pack template.

What is a kitchen makeover?

For TKDC, a kitchen makeover means a fully custom kitchen designed and built around your new home. We don't do surface-only refreshes or swap out a few doors. We plan the kitchen properly and make the cabinetry to order for your space and the way you live in it.

That gives you a kitchen sized for two and planned from scratch, rather than one adapted from a standard flat-pack range. It's the same custom approach as a full [bespoke kitchen renovation](#), scaled to suit a smaller home.

Why does downsizing change what you need in a kitchen?

Downsizing shifts what matters most. With a smaller home and fewer people to cook for, you need less benchtop to keep clean, smarter storage for the cookware and tableware you choose to keep, and finishes that stay low-maintenance.

A kitchen for two works differently from one built for a busy family. The goal of a kitchen upgrade now is comfort and ease, which is why small kitchen makeovers reward careful planning.

Before we propose anything, a [TKDC designer](#) visits your new home to see the footprint and how you move through it.

How much does a kitchen makeover cost?

The price comes down to a few things: *how much cabinetry your kitchen needs, the benchtop you choose, your appliances, and whether the layout changes*. A compact kitchen with simple finishes sits at the lower end. A larger project with premium materials costs more.

So one fixed figure rarely helps. Your kitchen makeover cost reflects your space and your choices. We've designed [custom kitchens since 1994](#), so our Project Costing is scope-based and shaped during design. The clearest way to know your number is a tailored Project Costing for your kitchen.

What are the most cost-effective ways to update a kitchen?

Getting value from a kitchen makeover is about where you focus the budget, not about cutting corners with quick fixes. In a smaller kitchen, a few smart decisions make your money go further.

- Prioritise a layout that suits the way you cook now, so nothing is spent on space you won't use.
- Put the budget into custom cabinetry that fits your room exactly, with no filler panels wasting space.
- Choose hard-wearing benchtops and splashbacks that stay looking good, so you're not redoing them later.
- Plan storage around what you're keeping, so every cupboard earns its place.
- Add considered lighting, like a pair of pendant lights over the bench, to lift the whole room.

The best value comes from getting the design right once. Our bespoke cabinetry is made to fit your exact space with no filler panels, so your money goes into a kitchen built to last rather than a surface fix that dates.

Should you choose a makeover or a full renovation?

It comes down to the kitchen you've got. If the footprint works, a makeover redesigns the kitchen within the existing space, with new custom cabinetry, benchtops and finishes built around how you live. If walls, plumbing or the layout need to move, that's a full kitchen renovation.

Either way the kitchen is designed and built from scratch for your home. The difference is how much structural work sits behind it.

[Michael Simpson and Peter Schelfhout](#) are registered builders, so they'll tell you straight which path your kitchen actually needs, and when the extra permits and trades of a full renovation are worth it. A quick word with a kitchen expert saves you paying for work you don't need.

How do you design a smaller kitchen that still works hard?

Good kitchen design matters more in a small space. With less room, every centimetre counts. Whatever kitchen style you love, a sleek modern kitchen or a relaxed Hamptons look, the same smart moves keep a compact kitchen working hard.

- Start with a tight work triangle so the sink, fridge and oven sit within easy reach.
- Run cabinetry full height so the walls work as storage too.
- Choose deep drawers and pull-outs over low cupboards you have to crouch into.
- Add a little open shelving to keep everyday items close.
- Plan around one hard-working zone instead of spreading the kitchen thin.

Because we build in our own [Melbourne factory](#), every cabinet is made to the millimetre for your room. Nothing's off the shelf, so a small kitchen uses every bit of space you have.

Which finishes and materials last the longest?

In a kitchen you'll keep for years, materials matter as much as looks. The choices that last are hard-wearing and low-maintenance.

- For benchtops, we usually recommend porcelain or engineered stone such as Ecolos. They handle heat well, up to around 220°C, and resist scratches and daily wear with very little upkeep.
- Scratch-resistant laminate is another excellent option, with a durable, low-maintenance finish in a huge range of looks for a smaller outlay.
- Cabinetry finishes chosen for durability hold up to knocks, steam and years of cleaning.
- Quality hardware, like soft-close hinges and drawer runners, keeps everything moving smoothly.
- Durable splashbacks in glass, porcelain or tile wipe clean in seconds.

Our designers talk you through these options in the showroom, matching the surface to how you use your kitchen. Our qualified cabinet makers then build with premium materials chosen for heat resistance, moisture protection and everyday wear, so the finish still looks right years after install.

What features make a kitchen easier to live in as you age?

Two things make a kitchen easier to live in as you age: accessibility and future-proofing. The features that help most reduce bending, reaching and strain, and they keep you steady on your feet. Plan them from the start and they add little to the cost.

- Set bench heights to suit you, so prep is kinder on your back.
- Choose deep drawers over low cupboards, so pots come to you.
- Fit clever corner storage, like a Häfele Leman corner unit, so you reach what's inside without bending into an awkward cupboard.
- Add internal storage accessories, such as drawer inserts and pull-outs, to keep everyday items easy to find and reach.
- Keep everyday items in easy-reach storage, between hip and shoulder height.
- Add good task lighting over the bench and sink.

- Fit lever taps, which are easier to use than twist handles.
- Lay slip-resistant flooring for safer footing.
- Leave space to sit, so you can prep or chat from a stool.

These are the internal storage solutions our designers recommend most for downsizers, because they make a smaller kitchen easier to use for years to come. Before we build anything, we walk you through your new kitchen in 3D, confirming that heights, reach, and access feel right for you, today and in the years ahead.

Does a kitchen makeover add value to your home?

Yes. The kitchen is one of the first things buyers notice, so a well-made one lifts your home's value, and it matters even more in a smaller property. Value shows up in daily living, too. A kitchen that works well every day pays you back long before you sell, and it holds its appeal as kitchen trends come and go.

We're the kitchen designer and builder of choice for many top-tier Victorian home builders. When professional builders trust their kitchens to renovation experts like us, you get the same quality that protects your investment and appeals to future buyers.

Bring your downsizing plans to our showroom

There's no single right way to start, so pick what suits you. To keep it simple, book a Discovery Call and talk your project through by phone, or a Video Project Consultation to walk a designer through your space on screen.

To see and feel the finishes, book a Showroom Tour, or just drop in, no appointment needed. And when you're ready to plan in detail, a [Project Consultation](#) brings a designer to your new home to design everything around it. You'll find us in [Blackburn](#), [Essendon](#) and [Eltham](#), open Monday to Saturday from 10am to 5pm.

While you're at it, the same team handles [renovations](#) right across the home, from [wardrobes and storage](#) to [bathrooms and laundry](#), and [living rooms](#), plus [home office and study nooks](#) and [outdoor living](#). Many downsizers refresh a few spaces at once for one consistent look.