

Walk into ten open houses in Los Angeles, and you will probably see white kitchen cabinets in at least seven of them. From new construction in the Valley to 1920s Spanish homes in Hancock Park, white is still everywhere. Yet I hear the same question from homeowners almost weekly: “Are white cabinets on their way out? Am I about to spend five figures on something that will look dated in five years?”

The short answer: white kitchen cabinets are not out of style in Los Angeles, but the way they are done is changing. Flat, cold, builder-basic white is fading. Warmer whites, mixed materials, and better cabinet construction are what actually feel current, hold up in daily use, and protect resale value.

The more important question is not just color. It is how the cabinets are built, what they are made of, and who is building them. That is where a good cabinet maker earns their fee, and where a lot of projects quietly fail.

Let us unpack the style question first, then connect it to the realities of custom cabinets, costs in Los Angeles, and how to choose the right professional.

What is happening in L.A. Kitchens right now

Los Angeles is not a single design market. Culver City duplexes, Malibu view homes, and mid city bungalows all pull from different aesthetics. Yet a few patterns keep showing up across projects.

First, white is still a backbone color. Real estate agents still push for it because it photographs well and offends almost no one. When buyers scroll listings, a white kitchen reads as “clean” and “move-in ready.” That matters when you are thinking about resale value.

Second, strictly all-white kitchens are slowing down. Five or ten years ago, a standard formula ruled: bright white shaker cabinets, white subway tile, white quartz with gray veining, brushed nickel hardware. That look is starting to feel generic, especially in design-forward neighborhoods like Silver Lake or Venice.

Third, there is a strong move toward contrast and warmth. In practical terms, that means white upper cabinets with oak or walnut lowers, white cabinets with darker islands, or white perimeter cabinets against warmer stone or textured backsplashes. Even when cabinets are white, finishes are softer: creamy whites instead of stark, slightly satin instead of high gloss.

The most popular kitchen cabinet style in L.A. is still some version of shaker or a clean, slab front, usually with a painted finish. Within that, there is a lot of variation in rail width, door profile, and hardware that separates a high-end custom job from a standard catalog order.

So if you love white cabinets, you are not behind the times. The question is how to execute them so they feel deliberate, not default.

Are white cabinets going out of style?

The phrase “Are white cabinets going out of style” is really code for “Will this feel dated and hurt my resale?”

Every design choice has a shelf life, but white cabinets are closer to a white dress shirt than a trendy pattern. They get reinterpreted every decade, but the underlying choice remains safe.

From a value standpoint, white is still one of the best cabinet colors for resale value in Los Angeles. Most buyers can live with it, even if it is not their dream aesthetic. Compare that with strong colors that can polarize: rich navy, deep green, even black. These can look stunning in the right house but make more sense when you are renovating a long-term home, not prepping a flip.

What does age quickly is an entire kitchen locked into one era's quirks. If you combine bright white cabinets with the trendiest backsplash, the exact quartz everyone has on Instagram this year, and a very specific hardware style, that bundle may timestamp your remodel.

If your priority is longevity, white cabinets paired with more classic choices tend to hold up longest:

Soft white painted cabinets instead of blue-white. Simple shaker or slab fronts rather than ornate raised panels. Sturdy natural stone or a timeless-looking quartz. Hardware shapes that are not too oversized or quirky.

You can still introduce personality with lighting, bar stools, art, and textiles. Those are a lot cheaper to swap out than a full cabinet replacement.

When white kitchens actually look dated

When I walk into a Los Angeles kitchen and it "feels dated" despite being fairly new, the issue is almost never that the cabinets are white. It is that the room reads flat and lifeless.

Several design traps recur:

Everything, including the grout, is the same bright white with zero texture or variation, so the eye has nowhere to rest. Lighting is an afterthought. Recessed cans are harsh, and undercabinet lighting is missing, so the white reads cold and institutional. The cabinet style is low quality. Door gaps are uneven, hinges feel flimsy, and paint chips at the edges. Cheap white shows its age quickly. The space around the cabinets is cluttered. White amplifies clutter and grime. Daily life in L.A. Kitchens is busy, especially in smaller homes, and white highlights that.

You can often fix a tired white kitchen without replacing everything. Better hardware, a different backsplash, warmer lighting, or refacing doors can buy another decade of life. Which leads to cost and cabinet construction.

Smart ways to update existing white cabinets

If your white cabinets are structurally sound but feel worn or out of date, there are several strategies to modernize them without full replacement.

Here is a quick, high-impact list I commonly recommend before anyone tears everything out:

- Replace hardware with a more current shape and finish, and fill/repair old holes properly.
- Add or upgrade undercabinet lighting to warm LEDs so the white finish feels softer and more expensive.
- Reface cabinet doors and drawer fronts in a cleaner style (for example, from raised panel to slim shaker) while keeping the existing boxes.
- Refinish or repaint with a more modern off-white and a higher quality, sprayed finish using a durable catalyzed lacquer.
- Introduce contrast through a darker island, wood open shelving, or a more textured backsplash so the room does not read as flat white.

For many Los Angeles homes, especially condos or smaller kitchens, it is cheaper to refinish or reface kitchen cabinets than to replace them completely. Refinishing is usually the least expensive if the existing doors are in decent condition, but it requires solid prep and a proper shop or spray booth for a result that feels like a factory finish.

Cabinet refacing sits in the middle: keeping existing cabinet boxes, replacing doors and drawer fronts, sometimes adding new panels and trim. For L.A. Projects, homeowners often spend in the range of a few thousand dollars for

a small kitchen to well over ten thousand for a large, more detailed space. That is a wide range because door style, wood species, and finish all affect cost significantly. Still, it usually comes in under full custom replacement.

Stock, semi-custom, and custom: what actually fits an L.A. Project

When we talk about “custom cabinets,” we first [Bradco Kitchens Kitchen Remodeling Services In Los Angeles](#) need to separate the main categories: stock, semi-custom, and fully custom.

Stock cabinets are mass-produced in fixed sizes, colors, and styles. You order from a catalog. They are generally the cheapest route but can be surprisingly expensive at the high end of the stock market. Installers fill awkward gaps with filler strips since the units only come in certain widths.

Semi-custom cabinets start with a catalog system but let you tweak dimensions, finishes, or door styles within limits. You might get extra tall wall cabinets, nonstandard depths, or a custom paint color for an upcharge. For many L.A. Homeowners, semi-custom is a workable middle ground.

Custom cabinets are built to order for your specific kitchen by a cabinet maker or a custom shop. Every dimension can be adjusted, every panel designed. This is how you get floor-to-ceiling cabinets in a 1920s Spanish home with uneven plaster or hidden storage in an awkward corner of a hillside house.

The difference between custom and semi-custom cabinets becomes clear when you deal with real walls in real L.A. Houses. Very few rooms are perfectly square. With semi-custom, you can get close and hide the rest. With fully custom, the boxes and faces are shaped to the space, which looks and feels better, especially in high end homes.

Are custom cabinets better than stock cabinets? In terms of fit, material options, and potential durability, usually yes. But “better” only makes sense relative to your goals, timeline, and budget. For a rental unit in Koreatown, premium custom maple boxes are often overkill. For a Pacific Palisades home with a high resale price, cut corners at the cabinet level are immediately obvious.

What a cabinet maker really does

Many homeowners hear “cabinet maker” and think “carpenter,” but the specialties differ.

A carpenter is a broader trade. They frame walls, build decks, install trim, and handle a wide range of structural and finish carpentry. A cabinet maker focuses on precise, often more delicate, work related to built-in storage: kitchen cabinets, bathroom vanities, built-in bookcases, entertainment units, and sometimes custom furniture pieces.

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So what is a cabinet maker, in practical terms? It is a craftsman or shop that designs, builds, and often installs cabinets and built-ins. They understand joinery, hardware systems, finishes, and the way wood and panels behave over time. They also know how to coordinate with plumbers, electricians, countertop fabricators, and inspectors, which matters in Los Angeles projects with strict codes and tight timelines.

What does a cabinet maker do day to day?

They take measurements, create detailed drawings or CAD models, select materials (hardwoods, plywood, MDF, veneers), cut and assemble cabinet boxes, build and fit doors and drawers, and finish them with paint or clear coats. Many cabinet makers also install their own work, which is ideal because they know how the pieces are meant to fit and can adjust on site.

Do cabinet makers install cabinets? Often yes, but not always. Some shops only fabricate and work with separate installation crews. In L.A., it is common for full-service shops to handle both fabrication and installation, especially for custom kitchens.

Do cabinet makers also do countertops? Some do, particularly for laminate or wood tops, but stone countertops are usually handled by specialized fabricators. A good cabinet maker coordinates exact cabinet dimensions and support so the stone shop can template and install accurately.

Can a cabinet maker make furniture? Many can and do. Built-in benches, banquettes, media units, and even standalone tables often come from the same shop that builds your kitchen. If you are investing in custom cabinets, it is worth asking whether they can also build matching pieces for a cohesive look.

What custom cabinets really cost in Los Angeles

Costs vary wildly by project, but there are patterns.

When people ask, “How much does a custom cabinetmaker cost” or “How much should I pay for custom cabinets,” they are usually trying to avoid two traps: unrealistically low bids that hide shortcuts, and inflated numbers that are more about brand than quality.

In Los Angeles, a fully custom kitchen from a reputable shop commonly falls into broad ranges like these:

For a small kitchen with simpler design and a painted finish, total custom cabinet costs (fabrication plus standard installation) might start in the mid tens of thousands. For a medium to large kitchen with more storage, taller ceilings, pullouts, and higher end hardware, you are often looking at totals that can easily reach the high tens of thousands or more.

Some shops price by linear foot, others by piece. Numbers like 800 to 1,500 dollars per linear foot for custom painted cabinets are not unusual here, but this depends heavily on material, door style, and finish quality. Premium veneers, integrated panels for appliances, and complex interior organization push numbers higher.

How much do custom kitchen cabinets cost in Los Angeles overall? For a full kitchen remodel that includes demolition, cabinets, countertops, basic electrical and plumbing adjustments, and finishes, many projects land somewhere from the mid five figures into the low six figures. The cabinets themselves often represent 25 to 40 percent of that budget.

Why are custom cabinets so expensive? Three big reasons:

Labor: Skill, time, and local labor rates in L.A. Are not cheap. Precise joinery, careful finishing, and on-site fitting simply take hours. Materials: Good hardwoods, furniture-grade plywood, high quality hinges and slides, and durable finishes all add up. Cheaper particle board with entry level hardware costs far less but shows its age. Overhead: A shop that maintains a proper spray booth, dust collection, quality tools, and experienced staff has real ongoing costs. That overhead is reflected in pricing.

What is the markup on custom cabinets? It depends on the shop structure. Some are design driven and mark up subcontracted fabrication. Others are full fabrication shops that mark up materials and hardware. It is not unusual in construction for overall markups (to cover overhead and profit) to fall somewhere in the 20 to 50 percent range, but this is a very rough generalization and varies widely.

Is it cheaper to buy cabinets or have them made? For basic layouts and noncritical spaces, ready-made or stock cabinets from big box stores or national manufacturers are usually cheaper up front. Once you start adding modifications, filler panels, and higher end lines, the gap can narrow. In some L.A. Projects, by the time a homeowner has priced premium semi-custom lines, a local custom shop is competitive, especially if the layout is tricky.

Do custom cabinet makers offer financing? Some do, especially larger shops, sometimes through third party financing. Many smaller shops work on progress payments tied to project milestones. Read the contract carefully. You do not want to be in a position where you have paid nearly everything before the cabinets are installed.

How much does it cost to remodel kitchen cabinets in Los Angeles if you are not going full custom? If you are refacing, you might be looking at mid to high four figures for a small space to mid five figures for a large one with premium doors. If you are simply refinishing, costs can be lower but quality varies dramatically between “paint in place with brushes and rollers” and “remove, spray in a booth, reinstall.”

Is cabinet refacing worth it? It can be, if your existing cabinet boxes are solid and the layout still works. Refacing makes less sense if your storage is poorly planned or the cabinets are low grade to begin with.

Materials and construction behind beautiful white cabinets

Color is only half the story. How the cabinets are built determines how they age.

What material is best for kitchen cabinets? In Los Angeles, for long lasting white cabinets, a common high quality combination is:

Hardwood face frames and doors, often maple or another stable hardwood for painted finishes. Furniture grade plywood for cabinet boxes, especially in sink areas or where moisture is likely. High quality European style hinges and full-extension drawer slides.

Are plywood cabinets better than MDF? It depends on the part. MDF is very stable and smooth, which makes it excellent for painted door panels and sometimes for full slab doors. It takes paint beautifully. However, MDF does not like water and can swell if it gets soaked. For cabinet boxes and structural parts, plywood typically performs better over time and handles fasteners more securely.

What is the best wood for custom cabinets if you plan on a painted white finish? Maple is a workhorse. It is dense, holds detail cleanly, and does not have the strong grain and tannin issues of oak that can lead to staining bleed-through. For clear finishes where you want the wood grain to show, white oak, walnut, and rift cut or quarter sawn variants are popular at the higher end of the market.

How thick should custom cabinet wood be? For quality boxes, 3/4 inch plywood is standard. Shelves are often 3/4 inch as well, sometimes thicker for wide spans. Drawer boxes can be 1/2 inch or 5/8 inch solid wood sides with a 1/4 or 3/8 inch bottom, depending on span and hardware. Cheaper cabinets often use thinner panels that sag or fail sooner.

Are framed or frameless cabinets better? Framed cabinets have a face frame at the front that doors attach to. Frameless (often called European) cabinets eliminate the face frame, with doors attaching directly to the box. Frameless allows slightly more interior space and a cleaner, more modern look, which works well in many L.A. Homes. Framed can suit more traditional homes and can be more forgiving on slightly uneven walls. Both can be excellent if built properly.

What is the best finish for kitchen cabinets, especially white? A high quality, professionally sprayed finish, often a catalyzed lacquer or conversion varnish, provides a durable surface that resists yellowing and chips better than standard wall paint. Many homeowners are tempted to use regular trim paint, but it does not behave the same on cabinet doors that get grabbed dozens of times a day. Ask your cabinet maker exactly what finish system they use and how they handle touch-ups.

What is the average lifespan of custom cabinets? Properly built and maintained custom cabinets can last several decades. I regularly see 25 to 30 year old custom cabinets in L.A. Homes that still function well, often needing only updated hardware and a refresh. Cheap stock cabinets, especially in rental units, can start failing much sooner.

Are custom cabinets a good investment? If you plan to stay in the home for a number of years and the property value supports the spend, yes. They improve daily function, visual quality, and resale appeal. Do custom cabinets add value to a home? They are one of the first things buyers notice. While it is hard to isolate the return on investment purely from cabinets, a well designed kitchen remodel is often cited by agents as one of the strongest value drivers.

At the very high end, what are the most expensive kitchen cabinets? Fully custom, hand built cabinetry using premium woods, custom stains, integrated hardware, and specialized finishes, often combined with complex interior organization. Some European manufacturers and bespoke local shops occupy this tier. For most homeowners, it is overkill. Your goal is usually durable, beautiful, and appropriate to the house, not showpiece pricing.

The process and timeline of custom cabinets

How are custom cabinets made, practically speaking?

A typical process for a Los Angeles project looks like this:

Initial consultation and measurement. The cabinet maker or designer measures the room, asks about how you cook, store, and entertain, and notes any unusual conditions. Design and revisions. Drawings or 3D models show layouts, elevations, and sometimes interior organization. This is where you also finalize details like white tone, door style, and hardware type. Shop drawings and approvals. Precise dimensions go into shop drawings. Once approved, the shop orders materials and schedules fabrication. Fabrication. Boxes are cut, assembled, and banded. Doors and drawers are built and fit. Everything is sanded, prepped, and finished, often in a dedicated spray booth. Installation. Old cabinets are removed if needed. New boxes are leveled, secured, doors and drawers hung, and adjustments made so reveals and gaps are even. Countertop templating and installation often slot into this period.

How long does it take to make custom cabinets? For a standard size kitchen in L.A., fabrication alone can take anywhere from four to ten weeks once drawings are approved, depending on the shop's workload, the design complexity, and material lead times. Larger or more detailed projects can take longer.

How long does a custom kitchen take to install? Pure installation of cabinets in an average kitchen might be anywhere from a few days to a week or slightly more, assuming walls are ready and there are no surprises. When you include demo, plumbing and electrical work, inspections, countertops, backsplash, and flooring, the full kitchen downtime is more often measured in several weeks.

Can custom cabinets be modified after installation? Minor adjustments are straightforward: changing hardware, adding pullouts, or swapping a door style in some cases. Major layout changes after installation are more difficult and expensive. Built-in pieces are sized to that specific room. That is why good design and detailed review upfront matter so much.

How do I measure for custom cabinets? In practice, you let the professional handle final measurements. Homeowner measurements are fine for ballpark quotes or early planning, but walls that look straight rarely are. A cabinet maker or installer should always do their own detailed field measurements before building.

Permits, value, and legalities in Los Angeles

Do you need a permit for kitchen cabinets in Los Angeles? It depends on scope.

Simply replacing or refacing cabinets in the same locations without changing plumbing, electrical, or walls is typically considered cosmetic and may not require a permit. As soon as you start moving plumbing lines, adding electrical circuits, removing or building walls, or touching anything structural, permits from the Department of Building and Safety usually come into play.

In practice, many homeowners skip permits for like-for-like cabinet swaps. However, if you are planning a larger remodel, planning to sell soon, or working in a condo with an HOA, doing the work with permits and inspections is usually the safer route.

From a value standpoint, a thoughtful cabinet decision supports both daily enjoyment and resale. White cabinets, when done well, remain a safe and attractive choice in the L.A. Market. The bigger risk to value is shoddy workmanship or a style that fights the architecture. A hyper-industrial kitchen in a 1920s Spanish revival, for example, often feels off no matter what color the cabinets are.

How to find and evaluate a good cabinet maker in Los Angeles

The most common question I hear after cost is, “How do I find a good cabinet maker” and “Who is the best cabinet maker in Los Angeles?”

There is no single “best.” There are several excellent shops, some tiny and some large, that are right for different budgets and projects. Your job is to match the shop’s strengths to your needs and to vet quality.

How do you know if a cabinet maker is good?

Look at their finished work in person if possible, not just photos. Check door alignment, gaps, and how drawers slide. Ask what materials they use for boxes, backs, and drawer boxes. Vague answers are a red flag. Ask about their finish process. Where do they spray, what products do they use, and how do they handle touch-ups or repairs? Pay attention to communication. Good shops are busy, but if it takes weeks to get a clear quote or their drawings never quite match what you discussed, that often predicts later headaches.

What should you look for in a cabinet maker beyond just price?

Here is a focused set of questions I recommend asking any prospective cabinet maker in L.A.:

- What materials do you use for cabinet boxes, backs, and drawer boxes, and why?
- Are your cabinets framed or frameless, and which do you recommend for my house and why?
- Who installs the cabinets, and how is installation coordinated with other trades like plumbers and countertop fabricators?
- What finish system do you use on painted white cabinets, and how has it held up for past clients?
- Can I see at least one completed project that has been in use for a few years, or speak with a past client?

The answers tell you far more than a pretty Instagram feed. You will also get a sense of whether the cabinet maker is thinking ahead about issues like appliance clearances, door swing conflicts, and how cabinets meet existing floors and walls.

Do cabinet makers do bathroom vanities as well? Most do, and bathrooms are often where homeowners first “test” a shop before committing to a full kitchen. Just remember that moisture exposure is higher in bathrooms, so material and finish choices matter even more.

What is the cheapest way to get custom cabinets? Usually by simplifying. Choose a standard door style. Limit glass fronts. Keep cabinet interiors straightforward rather than packed with specialty pullouts. Use a durable but common finish color. Focus the budget on the areas you touch and see daily.

If budget is extremely tight, stock cabinets or a mix of stock boxes with a few custom elements can be a bridge solution. For some homeowners, semi-custom lines installed by a skilled carpenter deliver enough quality without full custom pricing.

Are white kitchen cabinets still a smart choice in L.A.?

Taken together, the picture is clear. White cabinets are not on their way out in Los Angeles. They remain a strong, marketable choice, especially when executed with care: warmer whites instead of sterile tones, better materials instead of the cheapest particle board, and design that respects the home’s architecture.

The real decisions that affect both your satisfaction and your home’s value are deeper than color. They live in the details of cabinet construction, the experience of the cabinet maker, and how the kitchen works with daily life in your particular house.

If you love white, use it. Just pair that choice with a thoughtful layout, solid materials, and a cabinet professional who treats your kitchen as a piece of long-term joinery, not a box-counting exercise. That is how a white kitchen still looks and feels on-trend ten or fifteen years from now, instead of like last decade's quick flip.