

ROUGH and TOUGH

how to:



Create a Showpiece Kitchen for Your Cabin

AT A FRACTION OF THE COST STORY AND PHOTOS BY NEIL MATTHEWS

In this article, I'll show you a cost effective option for updating your kitchen using a real situation that got the job done with a little bit of elbow grease on a budget of approximately \$3,500. Here's how we did it.

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A custom set of kitchen cabinets from a supplier will set you back anywhere from \$10,000 – \$20,000 these days. For the average Joe on a tight budget, this is just not an option.

Here's what to do instead: search the local classifieds for used kitchen cabinets – there will be people that are renovating and upgrading existing residential cabinetry. You will be looking for cabinetry that we refer to as “modular”, meaning individual boxes that can be re-arranged to create a different footprint for any design. The countertops will likely not be re-usable, and don't worry about dated moldings or hardware – this stuff will be replaced anyway.

For this project, we found a complete set of maple cabinetry with appliances for \$1,500. The cabinetry was 20-years-old, with a faded finish and the usual signs of wear. But that doesn't matter; look beyond that stuff! All you're looking for here is “good bones”, in other words, cabinetry you can work with that is not falling apart. Before you make the purchase, you can even ask the seller to supply you with the modular cabinet dimensions so you can determine how they will work to create the new footprint for your application. You have to be flexible and creative in the design stage of the project here.

Professional re-finishing to restore the cabinetry would have cost thousands of dollars in this case, so we decided to instead do a hand-painted rustic finish that would blend very well with the surroundings of any cabin.



This dated maple cabinetry was perfect for our cabin project. All for just \$1,500



Inexpensive MDF was used to add trim and mouldings for added style

STEP 1 INSTALL THE CABINETY

Don't worry, this is not rocket science. Lay out the cabinetry with allowances for appliance dimensions, screw it together – making sure it is level and plumb – then secure it to the studs. At this stage of the process, make any required repairs to the interiors, remove old handles and fill holes with wood filler. Because we are doing a painted finish, you can add new panels, finished ends, moldings, and trim made of inexpensive paint-grade materials such as MDF (Medium Density Fiberboard) or pine.

In this case, we had vaulted ceilings and chose to add a new simple molding detail made from MDF to create a 5" riser with a plate molding at the bottom, and small 2 1/2" crown molding to the top of the riser before adding a full finished top to the cabinetry, as it was visible from above when looking down from the second floor.



No need to sand to bare wood – just enough for the primer to adhere.

STEP 2 PREP & PAINT

Remove all handles, hinges, and doors from the cabinetry; this will make the re-finishing so much easier.

20-year-old cabinetry will have light soiling from cooking, plus normal wear and tear, so before starting to sand it's a good idea to use a light de-greasing agent to wash down the doors; do this with damp rags rather than wet. Once complete, begin a simple light sanding of the finish with a sander and 220 grit paper. Profiles can be done with a sponge sanding block. There is no need to sand completely through the existing finish to bare wood; we are just trying to scuff up the existing finish so primer will adhere to it better. Fill any imperfections or existing handle holes with wood filler and sand flat.

Using a latex stain-blocker primer, brush all exposed surfaces with one coat and let dry for 24 hrs. Lightly buff all surfaces with a fine-grit hand-sanding sponge in between all coats to achieve a smooth finish. Apply two coats of a high grade latex satin finish base color of your choice to all surfaces, again allowing 24 hrs in between coats to dry completely.

STEP 3 GLAZING & CLEAR COAT

Let the finished paint cure for a week so the finish hardens. With this project we chose a quart of dark mocha coloured latex paint to glaze (or highlight) the profiles of the doors and trim work to give the appearance of an aged, rustic look. Try to work fairly quickly with this process as the paint flashes (starts drying) quickly. Brush paint into profiles, cracks, and crevasses working only one door at a time to the front only, and work manageable areas of the main cabinetry at a time. While the paint is still wet, use a damp cloth to wipe away the majority of the paint, only leaving the desired amount that you wish to be seen. Have only one person do the whole glaze to control consistency, as different people will create varying techniques. Let stand for 24 hours. The glazing process will dull the finish, so apply a final coat of satin latex clear coat to restore the luster and add a protective top coat. Re-install the doors, add new hinges and handles to create the look you want, and there you have it, a custom looking kitchen at an affordable price!



A dark mocha latex paint used as a glaze gives the cabinets a rustic, aged look

Cost breakdown

Kitchen Cabinets & Appliances	\$1,500
Delivery	+ \$250
Paint & paint supplies	+ \$350
New Hinges & Handles	+ \$650
New Counter Tops	+ \$750
Labour	– Free
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