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DESIGNER Q&A



JARRETT DESIGN, LLC

by daisy willis | photography by donovan roberts witmer

Specializing in kitchens and baths, Jarrett Design owner Jill Jarrett taps into her clients' ideas in the formative stage and cultivates them, like acorns growing to tall, flourishing oaks, into the living space they envision. The acorn motif is also a fitting symbol of the warm, nourishing feeling a well-designed kitchen should have, especially as family and guests seem to spend more time gathering and working there than ever. Jarrett's staff is not only certified by the National Kitchen and Bath Association, they also hold degrees in engineering and interior design, a distinction that no doubt helped them win a national kitchen design contest. Kitchens and bathrooms may be some of the more intimidating rooms to remodel, but Jarrett takes as much time as needed to educate clients, vet options and develop a project budget so headaches are minimized. "We try to make a daunting process manageable and fun," Jarrett says.

Jarrett Design's, Jill Jarrett, Right and AKBD, Senior Designer, Lauren Costar

What are your recommendations for updating a kitchen a little at a time?

If the cabinetry is in good condition, new counter tops and hardware can liven up an outdated kitchen. We've updated kitchens with new islands which become the centerpiece with the perimeter of the kitchen kept intact. If the homeowners really want a total remodel, but would like to do the project in stages in order to afford their dream kitchen, we work with them to come up with a plan. Patience and a creative approach can bring great results.

What's one product you use consistently?

Plain & Fancy Custom Cabinetry is the product we like to specify most due to their high quality construction and finishes, unlimited design options and exceptional value for the price. They are a nationally recognized, local, family-owned business with exceptional customer service. A Plain & Fancy kitchen is always the showpiece of any home.

One you try to avoid?

Generally, we avoid stock cabinetry of inferior construction. We want to provide cabinetry that looks great and works well for many, many years.



How do high/low budget projects differ?

We approach all projects with the same design process regardless of the budget. Even high-budget projects have their limitations. Our goal is to make each kitchen special to our clients without breaking the bank. High-budget projects allow for luxury elements such as cabinetry with specialty finishes or exotic wood species, professional appliances and countertops made from marble, wood, granite, soapstone or quartz, among others.

What do you need to know about your clients' lifestyle before you begin?

Almost everything! We joke that for the best results, no secrets can be withheld from your designer. Seriously, though, we spend countless hours getting to know our clients by asking lots of specific questions and really listening to the responses. Among the most important facets of our clients' lifestyles related to design is how they live in the space on a daily basis as well as during special occasions.

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What's the work "triangle" and your take on it?

The work triangle in a kitchen refers to the locations of the three most important work centers—refrigerator, cooking area and main sink—and how they relate to each other. It's our job to relate to the client the pros and cons of each floor plan so that we may come up with the one that works best for them. Due to our technical backgrounds, we approach each design from a functionality standpoint first, then build from there. Pretty kitchens are nice, but pretty kitchens that are a pleasure to work hard in are wonderful.

How do you approach old farmhouse kitchens?

Farmhouses are as challenging as they are charming, but we love a challenge. It's imperative to identify the constraints of the home in advance to avoid expensive surprises. We have a tool box of talented local craftsmen who can build any reproduction cabinetry and furniture we design. That's not to say farmhouses must have period kitchens. We love having fun by mixing the old and the new to bring an eclectic, contemporary feel to a farmhouse.

What's trending in kitchen design lately?

Everything we read and hear from the trend experts points to contemporary design. The Lehigh Valley is a conservative, traditional area, so we are seeing a trend of soft contemporary, with the majority in the category of transitional style.

Can you talk about some unique challenges you've faced?

We are currently in the process of designing a very detailed, formal kitchen in a fabulous lake house. The client purchased a large, ornate, antique buffet piece that we will be incorporating into a working island with seating.

What is the most common mistake homeowners make when they try to design a kitchen themselves?

Underestimating the expertise required to achieve the kitchen they desire. **S**

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