Southern Living

5 Kitchen Upgrades That Aren't Worth The Money

By Sarah Lyon | Published on August 06, 2026



Credit: Robbie Caponetto; Styling: Kendra Surface

Not all kitchen upgrades are worthwhile, Southern designers say—in fact, some choices may actually *hurt* your space's value in the long run. Below, you'll learn more about five kitchen elements that might sound promising during the planning stages but end up not being all that worthwhile in designers' eyes down the road.

Drawer Microwaves

While standard microwaves are too simple and bulky for some, drawer microwaves aren't necessarily the best alternative, explains Lindsey Herod, the founder of Lindsey Herod Interiors in Houston, Texas. "They're so much more expensive than a standard microwave and, honestly, more annoying to use." While Herod appreciates keeping appliances off the counter, drawer microwaves pose placement issues of their own, she says. "They take up valuable storage space and can be difficult and expensive to repair or replace because the cabinetry is built around them."

Pot Fillers

Herod is one of several designers who express disdain for pot fillers. "They can be beautiful, but they're really just jewelry for your range backsplash," she says. "Once you've filled a pot, you still have to carry it back to the sink to drain the cooking water, so they don't actually save as much effort as people think."

The plumbing involved in installing a pot filler can be tricky, too, adds Morgan Oberholzer, a residential designer with Cliffs Builders in Travelers Rest, South Carolina. "If a pot filler is installed on an exterior wall, it can also introduce the potential for plumbing issues in colder climates, such as frozen pipes or increased maintenance concerns if the plumbing isn't properly insulated," she says. "They typically don't increase a home's resale value."

Floating Shelves

There are all kinds of approaches people choose to take when it comes to kitchen cabinetry and storage. Floating shelves, according to Cate Gutter, aren't a preferred option, though. "While they photograph beautifully and can make a kitchen feel lighter and more thoughtfully styled, sacrificing valuable storage is rarely a worthwhile tradeoff in a hardworking kitchen," says the founder of CWG Design in Charlotte, North Carolina. "I almost always recommend prioritizing well-designed cabinetry to maximize storage and functionality, then incorporating floating shelves as an accent for displaying beautiful everyday pieces."

Colorful Oven Ranges

Your kitchen appliances might not be the place to experiment with color. "The most costly and ultimately valueless upgrades I have seen are the expensive European ranges installed in very specific and esoteric hues—think mustard yellow, chartreuse green, or aubergine," says Anne Hulcher Tollett, the founder of Hanover Avenue in Richmond, Virginia. "While these shades might be appealing to one client's aesthetic, they are often not appreciated by all." Your best bet, in the designer's eyes? Sticking to a neutral—or even a blue.

Personal, Statement-Making Features

Speaking of color, it's generally wise to steer clear of personalized features "whether that's a statement backsplash, boldly colored cabinetry, mixed metal finishes used simply because they're trending, or an overly themed design aesthetic," explains Traci Connell, the founder of Traci Connell Interiors in Dallas, Texas. After all, "One homeowner's dream kitchen may be another's renovation project." Sticking to timeless styles is the best bet for the long haul.