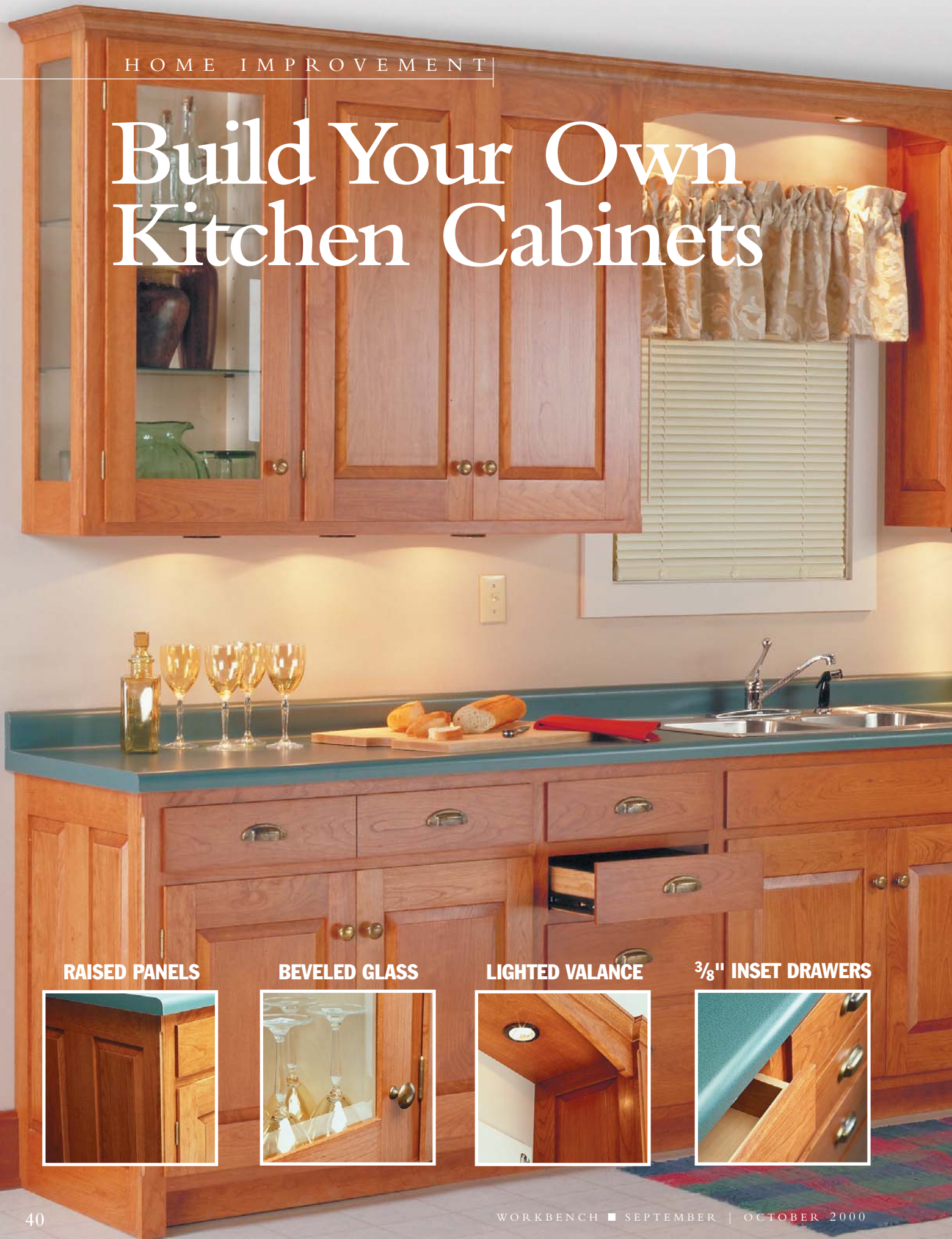


Build Your Own Kitchen Cabinets



RAISED PANELS



BEVELED GLASS



LIGHTED VALANCE



3/8" INSET DRAWERS





If you've dreamed of building a kitchen full of cabinets, stop dreaming and start building. Here's what you need to know to get custom results for half what stock cabinets cost.

For many home woodworkers, outfitting a kitchen with handcrafted cabinets is *the* dream project. Who hasn't looked at stock cabinets built with particleboard, hotmelt glue and staples and thought, "I could build something a whole lot better than this for half the money."

And they're right. By building your own cabinets, you can upgrade materials and construction methods. You're also not locked into "stock" sizes. The style, look, finish, and features are completely up to you.

If you think about it, cabinets are just a bunch of boxes. The only real challenge is the size of such a project. And that's manageable as long as you know where to get started and how to proceed.

In the following pages, we'll walk you through how we built these cabinets and how they compare with stock cabinets purchased from a home center. And hopefully inspire you to consider building your own.

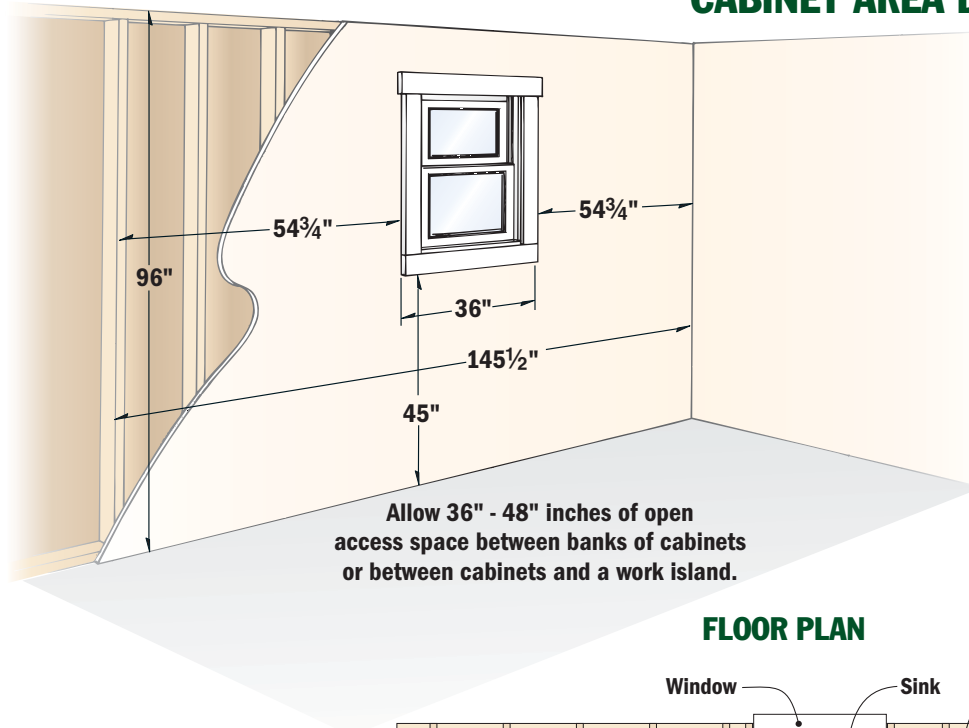
CUTTING BOARD



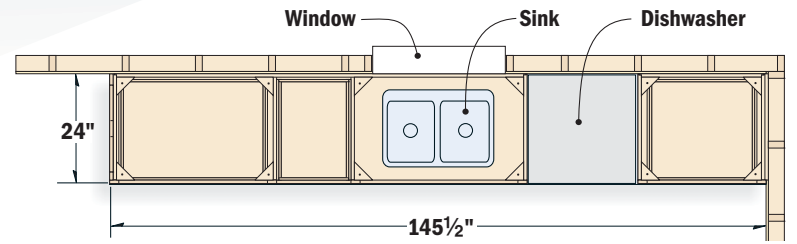
CUSTOM HARDWARE



CABINET AREA DIMENSIONS



FLOOR PLAN



BUY OR BUILD?

Unless you're independently wealthy, there's a limit on how much you can spend for store-bought (stock) cabinets. The typical approach is to pick out what you like, then whittle away at the extras to stay within budget.

But suppose you could spend that same amount on materials. By discounting the labor (after all, this is time spent in the shop), you can keep some of those extras and upgrade the materials and improve the quality. I found this out first-hand with this kitchen project.

Because kitchen configurations can vary so greatly, I built one basic wall of cabinets shown above. The wall measures just over 12 feet long and has a double-hung window

centered within the space. I wanted the sink to be located directly underneath the window. Since there isn't a soffit in this room, I could use extra-tall (42") wall-hung cabinets.

To help justify building the cabinets, I decided to do a little comparison shopping. So I took the layout to a local home center and asked them to fill the space with stock cabinets. The stock cabinets I selected were a raised-panel style in red oak that fell slightly above mid-range in price.

(See the description and photo of these cabinets at the bottom of the opposite page).

To outfit the kitchen with these basic, no-frill oak cabinets (see the next page), the estimated cost was \$2,553. When I asked them to price the same set-up in cherry, it jumped to \$3,403. Shipping to our door was another \$110.

By contrast, materials for the cherry cabinets I built cost less than \$1,400. And my design included a

PLANNING AND IDEAS

Obviously, you can't just start building cabinets without extensive planning. While we don't have room to address those issues here, we can steer you in the right direction.

Some of the best information on kitchen layout and design that I found was published by kitchen cabinet manufacturers. The free brochures at home centers contain checklists of what to consider: appliance sizes, utility locations, and the types of activ-

ities and features that are important to you. They provide grids for laying out the kitchen and are excellent sources for ideas on cabinet styles and layouts.

For additional reading, check out *Kitchens That Work: A Practical Guide to Creating a Great Kitchen* by Martin and Richard Edic (Taunton, 1999), and *Building Traditional Kitchen Cabinets* by Jim Tolpin (Taunton, 1994). Check your library or contact Taunton Press at (800) 477-8727.



20"-deep above-counter pantry unit with a built-in cutting board and a knife rack (see page 52). Such a unit wasn't available in stock cabinetry except as a 24"-deep, full-height pantry unit that overwhelmed the small space.

In fact, the cost was so far below stock cabinets I was able to add in a few more extras. One particularly nice touch was the display cabinet with beveled glass in both the door and the exposed side. The cabinets also feature custom frame-and-panel cabinet ends and a cove molding along the ceiling.

MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

If you stop by any home center you can find stock cabinets in oak, maple, cherry, hickory, pine, and birch. In most cases, at least the face frames, doors, and drawer fronts will be solid wood.

If you build your own cabinets, you're not limited to these materials (see some other options top right).

Another advantage is being able to select and match grain pattern and color. Manufacturers can't afford to spend time doing this. Instead, grain patterns are random and they use a toner to give the wood a uniform color and appearance.

The materials used commercially for cabinet carcasses, drawer boxes, shelves, and interior divider panels can vary widely. Usually, at least some of these parts are made from vinyl-covered particleboard or melamine.

Because my cabinet project required relatively small quantities of material for these parts, the total

cost difference to upgrade from 1/2"-thick melamine to 3/4" veneer plywood was fairly insignificant.

RAISED PANEL SUBSTITUTES

I decided to build these cabinets using raised panels. And I'll admit it added both time and cost to glue up solid wood panels, but I thought it was worth it.

A quicker, less expensive option is to build flat panel doors using 1/4" veneer plywood (see the top photo at right).

If painted cabinets will work in your kitchen, you might want to consider milling the raised panels in medium density fiberboard (MDF) and building the rails and stiles in poplar. Inexpensive MDF offers the added advantage of being stable, compared to the expansion and contraction of solid wood panels.



My shop-built cabinets feature 3/8" inset, solid cherry raised panel doors with wide rails. These features weren't available in stock cabinetry.

STOCK CABINET COSTS: (Raised-panel red oak)

(2) Wall Cabinets (12"D x 27"W x 42"H)	\$475.54
(2) Wall Cabinets (12"D x 30"W x 42"H)	492.90
(1) Three-dwr. Unit (12"D x 30"W x 18"H)	301.94
(1) Base w/Pots/Pans Drwr. (24"D x 30" W)	377.27
(1) Base w/Trays (24"D x 36"W)	380.99
(1) Base w/4 Drwr. (24"D x 18"W)	194.37
(1) Sink Base (24"D x 42"W)	221.34
(1) Scalloped Valance	49.60
(1) 3"-Wide Base Filler	17.67
(1) 3"-Wide Wall Filler	26.66
(2) Matching Toe kick Panels	14.88
TOTAL	\$2,553.16

NOTE: The costs shown do not include countertop. The stock cabinets as priced do not come with knobs and drawer pulls. Stock cabinet installation is available from most dealers at \$30-\$50 per linear foot.

SHOP-MADE MATERIAL COSTS:

4/4 Cherry - 100 bd. ft @ \$4.95/bd. ft.	\$495.00
(Face frames, doors, drawer fronts, toekicks)	
4/4 Birch - 30 bd. ft @ \$2.69/bd. ft.	80.70
(Drawer sides, nailers, blocking)	
3/4" Birch plywood - 5 sheets @ \$52.50/sheet	262.50
(Carcass sides, bottoms, dividers, shelves)	
1/4" Birch plywood - 5 sheets @ \$18.69/sheet	93.45
(Carcass backs, drawer bottoms)	
22" Accuride full extension drawer slides (11 pr. @ \$13.50/pr)	148.50
18" Accuride full extension drawer slides (1 pr @ \$12.50/pr)	12.50
Beveled glass (2 pieces)	100.00
Bin pulls (antique brass) - 16 @ \$1.40 ea.	22.40
Knobs (antique brass) - 11 @ \$1.10 ea.	12.10
Hinges (antique brass) - 12 pr @ \$1.99/pr.	23.88
Miscellaneous hardware	30.00
Stain and Finish	60.00
TOTAL	\$1,341.03

STOCK CABINETS: OVERVIEW

So you could see the actual differences between stock cabinets and our shop-built units, we bought two base cabinets and two wall-hung units built by a nationally-known manufacturer.

We had to order them through a local home center — few distributors actually carry an inventory of cabinets. Even with the current building and remodeling boom, it took just four weeks for delivery.

These cabinets, pictured at right, were a basic straight frame-and-raised panel design that represented the upper middle price range. For additional cost, we could have upgraded some components (more decorative arched panels, plywood side panels, and heavier drawer slides).

At the bottom of the following pages we'll show construction details of these cabinets.



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