From brewing your morning coffee and preparing dinner, to working on homework and gathering with friends, today’s kitchen is the hardest-working room in the house. It makes sense that a functional, state-of-the-art kitchen is at the top of most homeowners’ must-have lists. When it comes to creating a dream kitchen, costs add up fast. According to a Remodeling magazine survey, the average price of a midrange kitchen remodel is $53,259 in the Richmond area, while an upscale project can cost more than $107,000. We visited four recently-remodeled kitchens to show you how to get the most bang for your buck.
**A Cook's Kitchen**

For nearly a decade, Alan and Edie Hess lived with a kitchen they hated. “We loved everything about this house, except the kitchen,” Alan says. That might not have mattered so much but for one detail: Edie is a professional caterer. She knows kitchens.

Finally, Edie couldn’t take it any more. She approached a former neighbor — Richard Hendrick of Custom Kitchens — and asked him to remove the kitchen’s built-in desk area and replace it with a pantry for additional storage. The project “snowballed” from there, she says.

In the end, a wall was removed, opening the kitchen to the adjoining family room. With only one child at home (the other was off to college), the couple decided people could sit at a new high counter, eliminating the need for a traditional in-kitchen dining space.

The result: An enlarged kitchen with two workspaces, allowing Alan and Edie to function simultaneously while not bumping elbows or taking turns. “We never have any time, so we have to get things done,” Alan says. “We waited for the renovation until we knew what we wanted,” Edie adds. “We definitely got what we wanted.”

Now, the main kitchen area includes a Sub-Zero refrigerator so large that Edie refers to it as a “parked car”; a five-burner Wolf gas cook-top; two dishwashers; a microwave; a sink; and a 6-foot-long island. At the far end, there’s another sink, microwave, concealed refrigerator and 3-foot-square granite-topped table. Oh, and four GE convection ovens. Yes, four.

Edie laughs when asked about the ovens. “I do use all of them,” she says. “I’m in so many beautiful homes with beautiful kitchens with my [catering] business, but they’re not as functional as this one.”

Luckily, the couple didn’t have to sacrifice appearance. “We didn’t want to do a mediocre job; we wanted a lovely job,” Alan says. All appliances that could be hidden behind cabinetry are. Cabinets have inset doors (no hinges.

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**ROOM TO BREATHE**

The renovation opened the kitchen to the living room, adding a counter to eliminate the need for a traditional dining space.

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“There’s not one thing I would change. It’s the easiest kitchen I’ve ever worked with.”

— Edie Hess

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John Wagner photos
on display) and crown molding. Classically styled woodwork adorns the island and frames the kitchen from the adjacent family room.

"We worked out the details with Alan as we were building," Hendrick says. "It was nice to have someone so interested. That's certainly how we want to do things."

For their part, Alan and Edie are thrilled. "I'm very difficult to please; it's got to be perfect," Alan says. "Everybody was superb," Edie adds. "There's not a thing I would change. It's the easiest kitchen I've ever worked with. Everything has a place; everything is used. It fits like a glove." — PPC

APPLIANCES
A large Sub-Zero refrigerator and four GE convection ovens are proof that some serious cooking gets done in this kitchen.

FORM AND FUNCTION
The new kitchen combines the function of a professional catering kitchen with the beauty of classically styled wood cabinetry.
FOUR GREAT KITCHENS
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