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11 Illuminating Kitchen Lighting Ideas Homeowners Need to Try

Activity-filled kitchens call for a variety of lighting in distinct spaces.



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Nov. 19, 2024, at 4:02 p.m.



How your kitchen is lit can affect how well your spaghetti squash is sautéed or whether your guests feel welcome when you're sharing cocktails at the kitchen island.

Key Takeaways:

- Kitchen lighting needs to be bright and focused, but it also can evoke a sense of comfort and relaxation.
- Experiment with different textures and sizes to keep kitchen lighting on trend.
- Popular finishes include brass and brushed gold as well as organic materials such as rattan and stone.

The [kitchen](#) is a home's most multifunctional space – and how this gathering area is lit can affect how well your spaghetti squash is sautéed or whether your guests feel welcome when you're sharing cocktails at the [kitchen island](#).

How does a homeowner accomplish both at the same time? Designer Paul de Andrade, owner of Studio Kestrel in New York City, says the best kitchen lighting designs require multiple light sources in varying types, all of which are tunable.

For example, de Andrade recommends using high-quality LED strip lights under cabinets, which illuminate the entire countertop area. He suggests lighting with a color-rendering index, or CRI, of 90+ so strawberries look bright red and salads look crisp green.

“Lower quality lighting can make your countertop look washed out and sepia colored, which makes food seem dull and unappealing,” de Andrade says.

Here are 11 similarly bright techniques interior designers and kitchen experts propose that will make any kitchen feel warm and welcoming.

▶ **Related:** [How to Update Your Kitchen Cabinets without Replacing Them](#)

Layer Those Lights

Kitchens have a lot of activity: cooking, hanging out or entertaining. That means lots of lighting in various spaces, says Jessie Brinkley, an architectural designer with Melichar Architects in Lake Forest, Illinois.

“Kitchens require a lot of functionality in addition to beauty. Since there are so many affordable options available today, we are seeing layers of lighting that offer up lots of operational flexibility,” Brinkley says. “Function task lighting and decorative lighting – small recessed, under-cabinet, in-cabinet, pendant lighting – work in combination.”

Consider a Chandelier

If you want to make a style statement, add a bit of fanciness to the kitchen, says Courtney Cole, an Australian interior designer with TileCloud.

“Chandeliers are returning to kitchens, especially in more traditional or farmhouse-style spaces. If you want to give the room a luxurious touch, these will give you just that – especially when used over a dining area or kitchen island,” Cole says.

Mix Up Your Finishes

Not every light in your kitchen needs to be made from glass, says Alan Berman, president at Archetype Architecture in New York City.

“Think brass, leather, marble and artisan glass fixtures that tell a story. Mixing textures and styles creates a vibrant visual experience, making spaces feel alive and expressive with lighting as a key narrative element.” Berman says.

Try a Trend

Kitchen trends that are popular and will continue to evolve in the years ahead include [biophilic or nature-inspired design](#) as well as [sustainability](#), says Riki Lent, senior vice president of Kalco Lighting and Allegri Crystal in New Windsor, New York. This translates to kitchens that have warmer tones, softer shapes and an increased use of renewable materials.

"There's also a strong desire to infuse personality into interiors, so handcrafted elements that artfully infuse unique materials are becoming more important," Lent says.

Move Past Pedestrian Pendant Lights

Pendant lighting is a homeowner's chance to make a statement, de Andrade says. "Nowadays there are so many beautiful options, so try something sculptural or alabaster or rattan," he says. "It's a great way to break away from the often boring and utilitarian design of a kitchen and create a space that blends seamlessly with the rest of your home."

Don't Be Down on Downlights

The kitchen is the heart of the home, so its lighting needs to reflect that and be bright, warm and welcoming, says Antonia Caicedo, the interior architect and design director at Jimeco Interiors in Miami Shores, Florida.

"Overly bright lighting that works well in a garage or office space may not be the best for a kitchen space. Opt for a mix of downlights and pendants to achieve the perfect combination of functional and decorative," Caicedo says.

Dimmer May Be Better

Dimmer switches can be a kitchen's best assets, says Ashley Macuga, principal designer at Collected Interiors in San Francisco.

"Bedtime doesn't necessarily mean a kitchen's work is done. The middle of the night glass of water or midnight snack is better enjoyed under the soft glow of a sink pendant light," Macuga says. "Kept on a warm dim, it mimics the natural glow of sunset, helping you see without signaling to your brain that it's time to wake up and start the day."

Use Lights to Show Off Your Stuff

If you have a special piece you love to serve on or maybe a great family collectible, light it up, says Gabrielle Bove, owner of Opaline Interiors Studio in Boston.

"I love to hide LED tape lighting in specialty display cabinets to highlight my clients' dinnerware and glassware collections. These types of lights are perfect to turn on when you have company over for a dinner party and provide an element of interest," Bove says.

Take Tech to the Next Level

Bryce Crowley is co-owner of Kitchen Solvers of La Crosse in Wisconsin, working with clients on new custom cabinetry designs. He says homeowners need to add technology to their kitchen-lighting schemes.

"The integration of smart-lighting technology allows homeowners to control brightness and color temperature via smartphone apps or voice commands, enhancing the kitchen's versatility for different tasks and moods," says Crowley.

Add Smaller Shelf Lamps

Many homeowners have small or open shelving on either side of their sinks, and these areas can become landing zones for junk or miscellany. Instead, add pretty pendants on either side or bring in a decorative lamp to that otherwise dead space, says Tracy Metro, a Los Angeles-based interior designer and host of interior design show "House Doctor" on Netflix. "If you have opening shelving in your kitchen, putting a small table lamp on the shelf with a special shade adds so much style to the kitchen," Metro says.

Don't Forget the Small Details

Everyone always thinks about what's above our heads – what about those spaces at our feet? That's where a homeowner with a great designer can have some fun, says Leslie Dapper, lead designer at Rumor Designs in Steamboat Springs, Colorado.

"Under-cabinet lighting and toe-kick lighting for kitchens are both great ideas and easy to do yourself with things like LED light strips and rechargeable lights," Dapper says.