

If you ask three cabinet makers in Los Angeles what a custom kitchen costs in 2026, you will likely get three very different numbers. All of them can be right, and all of them can be wrong for your particular space.

Custom cabinets sit at the intersection of design, craftsmanship, construction, and local regulation. That is why you see such a wide spread in quotes, from “we can do it for 25 grand” to “you are looking at 120 plus.” The key is understanding what you are actually paying for and what you can reasonably expect at different price levels in the Los Angeles market.

This guide comes from the way projects really play out in homes from Santa Monica condos to Pasadena craftsman bungalows and the hills above Studio City, not from a generic national average.

The Short Answer: Price Ranges for 2026 in Los Angeles

For a typical Los Angeles kitchen, custom cabinets in 2026 generally fall into these ballparks, cabinetry only, excluding appliances, major structural work, and most countertops:

- Entry level custom or strong semi custom in a smaller kitchen: about \$18,000 to \$30,000
- Solid mid range custom kitchen cabinets: about \$30,000 to \$55,000
- High end custom with premium woods and features: about \$55,000 to \$90,000
- Large, luxury or ultra detailed kitchens: often \$90,000 to \$150,000 and up

If you prefer to think in linear feet, custom cabinets in LA frequently run about \$900 to \$1,600 per linear foot of cabinetry in 2026, sometimes more for boutique makers or exotic materials. That number includes design, shop drawings, fabrication, finishing, and installation.

When someone asks, “How much should I pay for custom cabinets?” my honest answer is: pay enough to get durable materials, proper joinery, and a finish that stands up to a decade of kids, pets, and takeout containers, but not so much that you are funding unnecessary complexity or trend chasing you will regret in five years.

What Is a Cabinet Maker, Exactly?

People often lump everyone with tools into the same mental bucket. In the trades, the line is clearer.

A cabinet maker focuses on built in storage: kitchen cabinets, bathroom vanities, laundry rooms, home offices, media walls, and sometimes custom furniture. Where a general carpenter might frame walls or hang doors, a cabinet maker works at a different scale, chasing tight reveals, clean corners, and flush installations.

So what does a cabinet maker do in a typical Los Angeles kitchen remodel?

They measure the space precisely, sometimes with laser tools. They design the cabinet layout, often in CAD, accounting for appliances, plumbing, awkward corners, and local building constraints. They specify materials such as hardwoods, plywood, and MDF, and choose hardware: hinges, slides, organizers. They build the boxes and doors in a shop, apply finishes, then deliver and install them, often coordinating with your general contractor, countertop fabricator, and electrician.

That leads into a common question: What is the difference between a carpenter and a cabinet maker? In very simple terms, a carpenter is often a generalist working on the structure of a building. A cabinet maker is a specialist focused on fine, built in woodwork and millwork. Some professionals wear both hats, but when you care about tight tolerances in a high end kitchen, you want someone who truly works as a cabinet maker.

Custom vs Semi Custom vs Stock: Where the Money Goes

Before talking deeper about cost, we need to clarify the hierarchy: stock, semi custom, and fully custom cabinets. A lot of cost confusion comes from not realizing which category a quote falls into.

Stock cabinets are off the shelf units with fixed sizes, finishes, and limited style choices. You see them at big box stores and some local suppliers. They are the cheapest way to get a functioning kitchen quickly. You work with what they have rather than what fits your space perfectly.

Semi custom cabinets are built to order, often with more choices of door style, color, and upgrades like soft close doors, but still based on a catalog of standard sizes and construction methods. You can tweak dimensions within certain limits, add fillers, and get a more tailored look without the full custom price. When people ask, "What is the difference between custom and semi custom cabinets?" that is the crux: semi custom modifies a predefined system, while custom starts from your specific space and design.

True custom cabinets are built from the ground up around your room. There is no dependence on a manufacturer's standard box sizes. Odd ceiling heights, tricky corners, angled walls, integrated lighting, and inset appliance panels can all be addressed cleanly. You are also choosing construction details: framed or frameless cabinets, face frame widths, door reveals, molding profiles, and interior accessories.

So, are custom cabinets better than stock cabinets? They are better when your space is irregular, your design standards are high, or you want the cabinets to feel like architecture rather than furniture pushed up against a wall. For a rental flip, stock may make more sense. For a long term home in Los Angeles with seven figure property values, custom usually aligns better with the overall investment.

Is it cheaper to buy cabinets or have them made? In direct dollars, buying off the shelf stock cabinets is almost always cheaper up front. Having them made custom costs more initially but often nets better long term function, longer lifespan, and stronger resale value, especially in higher end LA neighborhoods where buyers expect a certain level of millwork.

Why Are Custom Cabinets So Expensive?

When clients see a bid and feel sticker shock, I walk them through what drives the cost. A good portion of the number goes well beyond "just boxes and doors."

Materials come first. In Los Angeles, the best material for kitchen cabinets in most mid and high end projects is furniture grade plywood, not particleboard. So when someone asks, "Are plywood cabinets better than MDF?" the answer depends on the application. High quality MDF is excellent for painted doors and panels because it avoids wood grain telegraphing through the finish. For cabinet boxes, especially near sinks or in humid areas, plywood generally performs better than MDF or particleboard in terms of screw holding and moisture resistance.

The best wood for custom cabinets in a stained or natural finish is usually a hardwood like white oak, walnut, maple, or occasionally cherry, depending on style. Those materials cost significantly more than imported rubberwood or lower grade species used in cheaper factory cabinets.

Construction also drives price. Frameless cabinets with full overlay doors use every bit of available space and are popular in Los Angeles for a clean, European look. Framed cabinets, where a face frame surrounds the opening, can be more forgiving to install in out of square walls and are favored in traditional homes. Neither framed nor frameless cabinets are inherently "better." The cost difference comes from the specific joinery, hardware, and level of labor involved rather than the label.

Hardware is another cost multiplier. Full extension, soft close undermount drawer slides with high weight ratings cost more than side mount slides. Integrated organizers, pull out pantries, blind corner solutions, and custom spice drawers are all incremental. In a big kitchen, it is easy to add several thousand dollars just in internal hardware and organizational gadgets.

Finish is a major category. Sprayed conversion varnish or high performance 2K polyurethanes provide a hard, durable surface that stands up well to moisture and frequent wiping. When clients ask, "What is the best finish for kitchen cabinets?" I point them toward those professional spray finishes rather than simple lacquer or brushed enamel. The materials, spray equipment, and labor to do this correctly in a controlled shop environment are not cheap, but that is what gives you a finish that still looks crisp five to ten years later instead of yellowed and chipped.

Labor and overhead often surprise people. Los Angeles shop space, insurance, skilled workers, and compliance with California labor law add up. Custom cabinet makers are not just billing for hours with a sander. They are pricing in design time, shop drawings, job site visits, coordination with other trades, delivery, and installation. When people ask, "What is the markup on custom cabinets?" it usually sits somewhere between 30 and 50 percent over raw materials and direct labor, sometimes higher for boutique or premium brands that invest heavily in design and service.

Add all of that together and the price starts to make more sense.

How Much Does a Custom Cabinet Maker Cost in Los Angeles?

There are two layers to this question. One is the project total. The other is how the cabinet maker structures pricing.

In 2026, many Los Angeles cabinet makers either quote by the linear foot of cabinetry or as a lump sum based on a detailed design. Hourly billing is usually reserved for design consulting, small repairs, or change orders.

For custom kitchens:

- A compact condo or ADU kitchen might land around \$18,000 to \$30,000 for custom or higher end semi custom cabinets, depending on finishes and features.
- A typical family kitchen of 150 to 220 square feet often runs \$30,000 to \$55,000.
- Larger homes in neighborhoods like Brentwood, Hancock Park, or Pacific Palisades with butler's pantries, tall ceilings, and paneled appliances can easily reach \$70,000 to \$150,000 for cabinetry.

If you are only remodeling kitchen cabinets and asking, "How much does it cost to remodel kitchen cabinets in Los Angeles?" meaning new cabinets in the existing layout, that same kitchen may cost 20 to 40 percent less than a full kitchen remodel with walls moving, floors changing, and plumbing relocated. Cabinets are a large line item, but they are not the whole picture.

Some clients explore whether a cabinet maker can "just make the boxes" while they source doors or hardware. That can reduce the total a bit, but coordination and quality control become tricky. Most serious shops prefer to stand behind the entire system.

Are Custom Cabinets Worth the Money in Los Angeles?

In a vacuum, no cabinet is "worth" \$50,000. In the context of a Los Angeles home that might appraise at \$1.5 million or more, the math changes.

Custom cabinets are usually a good investment in three ways. First, they make daily life easier by fitting your cooking, storage, and entertaining habits. Second, they last. The average lifespan of custom cabinets, when built with quality materials and finishes, often reaches 25 to 40 years, especially if you avoid water neglect and heavy abuse. Third, they support resale. When buyers walk through LA homes, kitchen quality heavily influences perceived value. A high quality custom kitchen can add a meaningful premium and shorten time on market.

Do custom cabinets add value to a home? They do, but it is not dollar for dollar. Spend \$100,000 on a kitchen, and you are unlikely to see your home value jump by exactly that amount. Instead, you are improving marketability, reducing buyer objections, and aligning your property with the expectations of your neighborhood. That matters a lot in competitive Los Angeles markets.

Are custom cabinets a good investment for every property? Probably not for a short term rental or an entry level condo you plan to sell quickly. In those cases, mid range semi custom may make more sense. For a long term home or a higher end flip, custom cabinets are often worth it.

Refacing, Refinishing, or Replacing: Which Is Cheaper?

When people ask, "Is it cheaper to refinish or replace kitchen cabinets?" they are usually trying to stretch a budget.

Refinishing means stripping or sanding existing doors and boxes, then applying new paint or stain. It can be a strong option if the existing cabinet boxes are solid plywood or hardwood, the layout works, and you like the style of the doors. In Los Angeles, professional refinishing often runs \$6,000 to \$15,000 for a typical kitchen, sometimes more for heavy prep or complex details.

Refacing keeps the boxes but replaces the doors and drawer fronts, and often adds a thin veneer over the visible face frames and end panels to match. Is cabinet refacing worth it? In a lot of tract homes where the layout is fine but the style is dated, yes. Refacing costs in LA in 2026 often range from about \$10,000 to \$25,000, depending on materials, door style, and whether hardware and drawer boxes are upgraded as well. "How much does it cost to reface kitchen cabinets?" will always depend on size and complexity, but it is typically 40 to 60 percent of full replacement.

Full replacement with new custom cabinets costs more, but it is your chance to fix layout problems, change cabinet heights, increase storage, and integrate modern hardware and lighting. If the bones of your existing cabinets are poor quality particleboard, replacing usually beats putting good money into a weak foundation.

Design Style, Color, and Resale Value

Los Angeles has both modern and traditional pockets, sometimes on the same street. Choosing a cabinet style and color that respects your architecture and appeals to future buyers is not just a design call; it is a financial one.

So what is the most popular kitchen cabinet style right now? In 2026, simple shaker doors still lead in market share, especially in painted finishes. Flat panel or slab doors remain strong in modern and contemporary homes. More detailed raised panel doors are still seen in classic or Mediterranean homes, but there is a trend toward cleaner lines even there.

Are white cabinets going out of style? Pure, bright white is not disappearing, but the dominance is softening. Warmer whites, greige tones, light oak, and two tone kitchens are very common across LA. That said, white remains a safe choice for resale if paired with warm textures so the kitchen does not feel sterile.

What is the best cabinet color for resale value? In most Los Angeles neighborhoods, neutral palettes with white, off white, light greys, and light natural woods still deliver the broadest appeal. Bold colors can be beautiful but

should be used carefully, especially in smaller spaces. If you do want one color moment, painting the island in a deeper tone and keeping perimeter cabinets neutral often balances personal taste and resale safety.

For the most expensive kitchen cabinets, you usually see custom work in hand selected rift sawn white oak, walnut, or [Cabinet Refacing Los Angeles](#) exotic veneers, often with integrated lighting, hand finished stains, and high end interior accessories. Here, you can see cabinetry packages well into six figures for large estates. The cost is driven not just by materials but by craft detail and finishing time.

Materials and Construction Details That Actually Matter

Clients often get lost in marketing language and overlook the practical questions.

What material is best for kitchen cabinets? For most Los Angeles kitchens, the sweet spot looks like this: plywood cabinet boxes with hardwood or MDF doors, depending on whether you are staining or painting. Plywood handles moisture and fasteners well, which matters in an earthquake prone, coastal climate. MDF, if it is dense and high quality, is excellent for painted doors and panels because it resists warping and takes a smooth finish.

Are plywood cabinets better than MDF? For boxes, yes, most of the time. For painted doors, MDF can be better than solid wood because it avoids the expansion and contraction issues that cause hairline cracks at joints.

How thick should custom cabinet wood be? For cabinet boxes, many quality shops use 3/4 inch plywood for sides and shelves. Back panels may be 1/2 inch or even 3/4 inch on high end builds. Drawer boxes in good custom cabinets are often 5/8 or 3/4 inch hardwood with dovetail joinery. Anything thinner or made from low grade particleboard is a red flag in an LA level project.

Framed or frameless cabinets, which are better? Frameless gives you more interior space and a sleek look, which fits a lot of Los Angeles modern and transitional designs. Framed can feel more traditional and can be forgiving in older homes with uneven walls. I have specified both many times. The key is not the label but the quality of construction and installation.

Timeline: How Long Does It All Take?

"How long does it take to make custom cabinets?" is not just idle curiosity. In LA, lead times affect when your contractor can start demolition, when you can template countertops, and how long you are cooking on a hot plate.

From final design approval and signed contract, most Los Angeles cabinet makers in 2026 quote 8 to 14 weeks for fabrication of a full kitchen. Some high volume or imported semi custom lines can be a bit quicker. Truly bespoke, detail heavy projects can go longer.

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"How long does a custom kitchen take to install?" Typical cabinet installation runs 3 to 7 working days for an average kitchen, plus a couple of days for trim work, panels, and adjustments. Large or highly detailed kitchens with paneled appliances, multiple tall runs, and complex moldings can stretch to two or even three weeks on site, especially if other trades are working around the same area.

Remember that countertops cannot be templated until the cabinets are installed and secured. That means you should expect a gap of 1 to 3 weeks after cabinet install before countertops go in. Plan your temporary kitchen accordingly.

Permits, Regulations, and Los Angeles Specifics

One frequent question in LA: Do I need a permit for kitchen cabinets in Los Angeles? If you are only replacing cabinets in the same layout, without moving plumbing, gas, or electrical, Los Angeles generally does not require a building permit just for the cabinets. Once you start moving walls, adding circuits, relocating gas lines, or substantially altering structure, permits through LADBS come into play.

It is smart to verify current requirements with the Los Angeles Department of Building and Safety or have your general contractor handle the permits. Neighborhoods with HOAs or condo boards may have additional approvals.

As for "Who is the best cabinet maker in Los Angeles?" there is no single answer. Some shops excel at ultra modern frameless work, others at old world stained oak. The "best" cabinet maker is the one whose craftsmanship, communication style, and pricing align with your project.

Working With a Cabinet Maker: Finding, Vetting, and Measuring

If you have never hired one before, it is understandable to ask, "How do I find a good cabinet maker?" and "How do you know if a cabinet maker is good?" Referrals from experienced general contractors, interior designers, and friends who have done similar quality projects are usually more reliable than anonymous online reviews.

When you meet, ask to see recent work, not just a curated portfolio of their all time favorites. Go to at least one finished kitchen if possible, open drawers and doors, and look closely at reveals and corners. A good cabinet maker will talk comfortably about materials, joinery, and finishes, not just style names.

Many clients like having a checklist. Here are focused, practical questions you can ask that reveal a lot about how a shop operates:

- What materials do you use for boxes, backs, shelves, and drawer boxes, and how thick are they?
- What finish system do you use, and how has it held up in past kitchens after five or more years?
- Who installs your cabinets, and are they part of your team or subcontractors?
- How do you handle site measuring, shop drawings, and coordination with countertops and appliances?
- What is your typical schedule from contract to install, and how do you handle delays or change orders?

You might also ask, "Do cabinet makers install cabinets themselves?" Many custom shops in Los Angeles have in house installers. Some use dedicated installation subcontractors they work with regularly. Either approach can work, but consistency and accountability matter.

"Do cabinet makers also do countertops?" Some do, bundling cabinets and countertops into one contract, often with a stone fabricator as a partner. Many only coordinate with your chosen stone or quartz fabricator. Clarify this early, especially if you want a single point of responsibility.

"Can a cabinet maker make furniture?" Very often yes. Many custom shops also build dining tables, built in benches, media units, or unique pieces that match your cabinetry. If you want a coordinated look, it is worth asking.

"How do I measure for custom cabinets?" If you are just seeking ballpark bids, you can measure wall lengths, ceiling heights, window and door positions, and existing cabinet runs with a tape measure, then sketch. That is fine for preliminary estimates. Before final design and fabrication, your cabinet maker should always do a professional site measure. Do not rely on your own rough sketch for final dimensions.

Modifications, Financing, and Living With Custom Cabinets

People sometimes wonder, "Can custom cabinets be modified after installation?" The honest answer is, only up to a point, and often not cheaply. Adjusting doors and drawers is routine. Swapping hardware is easy. Changing cabinet widths, altering layout, or adding large new features after installation usually means new parts and finish work that may not perfectly match sun aged panels. This is why careful design up front pays off.

"Do custom cabinet makers offer financing?" Some larger shops or dealer affiliated lines work with financing partners to offer payment plans. Many small, high quality local shops do not offer in house financing but will structure payments as a deposit, progress payment, and final balance. If financing matters to you, ask early and be realistic about how that may limit your choice of vendor.

"What is the cheapest way to get custom cabinets?" There are a few levers. Simplify the layout. Reduce the number of specialty organizers. Choose a standard paint color rather than custom color matching. Use high quality plywood boxes with flat panel doors rather than intricate raised panels or complex moldings. You can also mix: custom in high visibility areas and more economical solutions in secondary spaces like laundry rooms.

Finally, remember that cabinet makers also commonly build bathroom vanities, laundry room storage, and built ins. So if you are already hiring a shop you trust, ask whether they do bathroom vanities and other rooms. Bundling projects can sometimes save a bit on mobilization and finishing costs.

Custom kitchen cabinets in Los Angeles in 2026 are not cheap, but when designed thoughtfully, built with solid materials, and installed with care, they become part of the architecture of your home for decades. The more you understand about what affects cost, the easier it is to make decisions that fit both your budget and the way you live.