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Second kitchens in Long Island homes for cultural, budgetary needs



By Liza N. Burby [Special to Newsday](#) Updated July 31, 2024 2:00 pm

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Terri Barr and Moshe Albaum, of Great Neck, wanted a kitchen that could be kept kosher. Instead of renovating their existing one, they bought the 1,100-square-foot apartment next door and spent more than \$240,000 expanding it.

Now, the 300-square-foot kitchen accommodates their kosher cooking and entertainment needs — and multiple additional appliances.

"Everything in my kitchen has to be kosher and then once it gets to my kitchen, I have to keep it kosher," said Barr, 71, a mediator. "I have a meat dishwasher and a pareve dishwasher just for things that are neither meat nor dairy. I also have three sinks, two ovens, a warming oven and a large fridge."



Terri Barr and Moshe Albaum renovated their kitchen to have multiple dishwashers, sinks and a large fridge. Credit: Rock Kopstein

Barr's kitchen is reflective of Long Island's melting pot of cultures and ethnicities, with some homeowners installing additional appliances in an existing kitchen or adding an entire second kitchen to accommodate their unique cooking requirements.

But with Long Island home prices continuing to surpass record highs, real estate experts say the cost of living is adding to the desire for second kitchens.

Multigenerational needs

Real estate agents say they have clients specifically looking for homes that already have a second kitchen or space that can be converted to accommodate religious and cultural needs.

But this isn't a new trend, said Olufemi Adebajo, 49, associate broker with Keller Williams Legendary in Franklin Square.

"There have always been cultural reasons for a second kitchen," said Adebajo. "For Jewish people, it might be a kosher kitchen. For the Italian culture, some have what they call a summer kitchen where most of the cooking is done in the basement and the main kitchen is kind of the showpiece."

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— Dean Lykos, Douglas Elliman broker

What is changing is the cost of Long Island homes, which means many buyers are looking for those with second kitchens to accommodate extended families who will live with them, said Dean Lykos, 39, a licensed real estate associate broker with Douglas Elliman in Dix Hills.

"The cost of living and cost of houses have priced out a lot of first-time homebuyers, so a multigenerational home is the only way to buy and make it affordable for some people," Lykos said.

"The extended family helps pitch in for the cost and it just is very convenient having them also under the same roof."

Interactive content by Flourish

Lykos had a listing in April in Farmingdale that attracted more buyers than he anticipated, "because almost everybody who came to see it came because of the second kitchen for their family." It sold in 18 days for \$35,000 over the asking price of \$775,000.

How that second kitchen is used depends on the family dynamic, Lykos said. Some keep them separate and others use the second kitchen for additional cooking for family events.

"If you have a large family around the holiday time when everybody's getting together, you'll find yourself using both," Adebajo said.

Because of limited inventory, some buyers will pursue a home that doesn't have a second kitchen but has a layout that includes space in which they can install one later, Lykos said. Typically that includes high ranches and split levels.

"It's easier to add that second kitchen to an existing space in those styles that may be functioning as a different type of room," he said. "You're going to have a harder time with a Colonial or a Cape where you might lose a bedroom."

Adebanjo, who sells homes in the Five Towns area where he said a lot of homes come with two kitchens, agreed.

"For the ones that don't, they just have to look for the space where they can put the second kitchen, like a laundry room and a basement, whether that's finished or unfinished," he said. "If the space is there where they can convert it, then for them it makes perfect sense."

Special cooking needs



Stanley Qin in the kitchen of his Russell Gardens kitchen that he and wife, Michelle, renovated to accommodate her cooking needs. Credit: Danielle Silverman

Some cultures specifically want a kitchen that has gas for using very high heat in cooking, said Debra Russell, a real estate adviser at Daniel Gale Sotheby's International Realty in Cold Spring Harbor.

"Clients are looking at houses that have this option but I wouldn't say they would not buy because it didn't have it," she said. "If there's natural gas on the street and the gas wasn't in the house, they would be open to hooking to the natural gas."

Susana Duran, 50, who is co-owner/designer of NTIC Designs Corp. in Hicksville, has been designing about three second kitchens a year since 2011 in towns like Hempstead, Syosset, Babylon, Bay Shore and East Islip. She said that many homeowners are looking for a commercial-grade exhaust fan to prevent the odor of cooking from spreading to the rest of the house. While most homes have between 200 and 600 CFM (cubic feet per minute) for \$200 and up, commercial vents used in homes are over 600 CFM and cost \$1,000 or more.

"The installation price varies for each vent because each requires a specific electrical outlet," she said. That can mean a 20 amp outlet and circuit breaker rather than 15 amps.

That was among the needs for Michelle and Stanley Qin when they renovated their kitchen after they moved into their Russell Gardens Tudor-style home in 2017. To accommodate Michelle's cooking preferences of using Chinese spices and oil, she had an industrial fan installed.

But she said it's still not powerful enough to control the odor, and it's hard to clean, so she's looking for a Chinese brand to replace it. She also has a steam oven in the central island where she cooks fish and vegetables and heats rice. In fact, though they have a regular oven, she said she's never used it.

"The steamer oven was one of the best things we added. I use it to steam fish and vegetables. It's just really convenient. I use it almost every day," Michelle said.

Adding your own



Nava Slavin, president of the Creative Edge Inc., suggests clients think about what they want to do and why when planning these projects. Credit: Rick Kopstein

3 things designer Nava Slavin asks clients:

1. **What do you want to do and why?**
2. **How much space do you actually have to work with?**
3. **What's your budget?**

Lykos recommends that buyers who plan to add another kitchen educate themselves on the options and work with experts who specialize in variances — waivers to deviate from existing zoning laws — like a real estate state attorney or contractor. He said given how quickly homes move in this market, "you'll want to know what the steps are, have an idea of cost associated with it, what the

different types of permits are and what different towns and counties require in order for it to happen."

The permit application process — which you'll need to obtain the proper certificates of occupancy, especially if you ever want to resell — varies by town. Duran said right now it's taking four to six months.

"It depends on the design and where exactly the second kitchen is going to go if we're doing any kind of extension or addition to the house," she said. "If you're getting a second stove or a second sink, you do need a permit. In most towns, they do request that you file for a building permit or for a plumbing permit for that additional fixture."

Designer Nava Slavin, president of the Creative Edge Inc. in Roslyn, said she asks clients to focus on what they want to do and why. "A secondary consideration might be how much space they actually have to work with and their budget because it becomes expensive when you have two of everything," she said.

Duran added that homeowners should consider that their taxes might increase. "They'll also see an increase in electricity or gas usage that they may not have been thinking about, so be sure you can actually afford that second kitchen and extra appliances. And you may need to upgrade your electricity to 200 amps if you don't have enough amps for the new appliances."

On a budget?



Susana Duran, co-owner/designer of NTIC Designs Corp., said to expect to spend upwards of \$40,000, similar to any other kitchen renovation. Credit: Debbie Egan-Chin

But you don't have to go with an expensive renovation. Duran said that for a number of her clients, the second one is just a working kitchen. "They'll have the nice kitchen that is basically just for show, but the other one is where they're actually cooking." So while you may want to invest in quality appliances, you don't need top-of-the-line cabinetry.

"You can have more fun because it's more like a personal kitchen. This is your space, as opposed to the other one you're kind of showcasing," Duran said. "Right now what's trending is white, but a lot of people play around with colors in their second kitchen, like blue cabinets or butcher block countertops."

Duran said that just as with any kitchen renovation, you should expect to be spending from \$40,000 and upwards, especially if you have to hire an architect to add a room.

But it may be worth the investment because resale isn't usually a problem.

"For the most part, everybody would always rather have more than less," Adebanjo said. "But if it's a situation where you have two kitchens that you really don't need, then buy the house, take it out and have that other room to basically do whatever you choose with it."

Chef's kitchens

Some Long Island homes, usually those that list for \$1.52 million or more, have a chef's kitchen where the cooking is contained to separate from the family kitchen. Andrew Giambertone, principal of Giambertone Architects in Huntington, said he designs these kitchens for clients who have large estates with homes of 15,000 to 20,000 square feet..

"We create in a location that's either convenient to serving or somewhat remote so that the mess and the smell doesn't permeate through the house," he said. "A chef's kitchen is generally a bit more commercial oriented in terms of the materials and the quality of the appliances and geared towards a little heavier duty cooking."

They tend to include commercial-grade appliances, stainless steel countertops and exhaust systems and cost about \$500,000.

Giambertone said this fits local history. "If you look back historically at estates on Long Island, the family kitchen was actually very small and utilitarian, and because they were afraid of fire, there'd be a much larger kitchen in the basement, and there were dumbwaiters to bring food up to be served."

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