

NEW BRUNSWICK KITCHENS

Cabinets & Storage

Custom cabinetry, stock cabinets, cabinet refacing,
hardware, soft-close hinges, and kitchen storage
solutions

25 Expert Answers from Kitchen IQ

newbrunswickkitchens.com/construction-brain

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Does home insurance in New Brunswick cover kitchen cabinet damage from a plumbing leak or burst pipe, and what do I need to document for a successful claim?

Most New Brunswick home insurance policies will cover kitchen cabinet damage from sudden plumbing leaks or burst pipes, but coverage depends on the cause being "sudden and accidental" rather than gradual damage from poor maintenance. The key is proper documentation and understanding what your specific policy covers versus excludes.

Standard Coverage for Sudden Water Damage

New Brunswick home insurance typically covers cabinet damage when water escape is sudden and accidental — like a burst dishwasher supply line, failed washing machine hose, or frozen pipe that bursts during our harsh winters. Your policy's "water damage" or "escape of water" section usually covers the resulting damage to cabinets, flooring, drywall, and contents. However, the source of the leak matters enormously. A burst pipe behind your kitchen sink that floods your lower cabinets would typically be covered, while slow seepage from a deteriorating seal that causes mold over months would likely be excluded.

Most NB insurers distinguish between "sudden and accidental" versus "seepage and leakage." Gradual damage from a dripping faucet, worn-out caulking, or aging supply lines that slowly leak behind cabinets often falls under exclusions. This is particularly relevant in New Brunswick's older housing stock, where many homes have original plumbing from the 1960s-1980s that's prone to gradual deterioration.

Critical Documentation Steps

Start documenting immediately, even before calling your insurer. Take extensive photos and videos of the water source, damaged cabinets, and surrounding areas from multiple angles. Capture the extent of water pooling, cabinet swelling, delamination, and any visible mold starting to form — this happens quickly in NB's humid conditions. Document the serial numbers and model information of any appliances involved, and photograph your kitchen's overall condition before cleanup begins.

Save everything that's damaged but don't throw anything away until your adjuster gives approval. Keep receipts for emergency mitigation (like renting dehumidifiers or fans), temporary lodging if your kitchen is unusable, and meals eaten out during repairs. Create a detailed inventory of damaged items including cabinet age, manufacturer, finish, and approximate replacement cost. If you have renovation receipts from when the kitchen was installed, these become crucial for establishing value.

Working with Adjusters in New Brunswick

NB insurance adjusters understand our climate challenges — they know that water damage spreads quickly in Maritime humidity and that cabinet materials common in older homes (particleboard cores, laminate surfaces) are particularly vulnerable to swelling and delamination. Be present during the adjuster's inspection and point out all damage, including areas that might not be immediately obvious like cabinet toe kicks, interior shelving, or damage behind appliances.

Many NB claims involve **additional living expenses** if your kitchen becomes unusable during repairs. Document increased meal costs, temporary appliance rentals, and any hotel stays if the damage affects your home's habitability. Keep all receipts — most policies cover reasonable additional expenses during the repair period.

Common Coverage Exclusions to Know

Flood damage from external sources (overland flooding, storm surge, or sewer backup) typically requires separate coverage in New Brunswick. Many standard policies exclude damage from frozen pipes if you failed to maintain adequate heating — relevant during our cold winters when homes are vacant or heating systems fail. Maintenance-related damage is consistently excluded, so that slow leak from your 30-year-old dishwasher supply line that finally causes cabinet damage likely won't be covered.

Maximizing Your Claim Success

Report claims immediately — delays can hurt your case, especially if secondary damage like mold develops. Most NB insurers have 24/7 claim reporting, and quick action shows you're taking reasonable steps to minimize damage. Consider hiring a public adjuster for major losses over \$15,000, as they understand local construction costs and can advocate for full replacement rather than repair of severely damaged cabinets.

When Kitchen Renovations Get Involved

If your cabinets are older and discontinued, insurers may pay for "functional replacement" rather than exact matching. This sometimes creates an opportunity to upgrade your entire kitchen if partial replacement would look mismatched. Work with contractors experienced in insurance work who understand how to document and justify replacement costs to adjusters.

Need help finding contractors experienced with insurance restoration work? New Brunswick Kitchens can match you with local kitchen renovators familiar with the claims process and working with adjusters to restore your kitchen properly.

Q2

Who are the best local custom cabinet makers and millwork shops in Moncton, Fredericton, and Saint John, and what do their prices typically run?

New Brunswick has several excellent custom cabinet makers and millwork shops, but I can't recommend specific companies by name since New Brunswick Kitchens maintains neutrality as a matching service. However, I can guide you on what to look for and typical pricing across the province's major centers.

Custom Cabinet Pricing in New Brunswick

Custom cabinets in Moncton, Fredericton, and Saint John typically run **\$18,000 to \$25,000+ for an average kitchen**, with premium projects reaching \$30,000-\$40,000. This pricing reflects New Brunswick's skilled woodworking tradition and lower labor costs compared to Ontario or BC. Per linear foot, expect **\$800-\$1,200 for painted cabinets** and **\$1,000-\$1,500 for stained hardwood**, including installation.

What Makes NB Custom Cabinet Makers Stand Out

New Brunswick's millwork shops excel at **solid wood construction** — crucial for our climate's humidity swings and dry winter air. Many shops specialize in Maritime hardwoods like birch, maple, and oak, often sourced locally. The craftsmanship tends toward traditional joinery methods, creating cabinets that last 30+ years in NB's challenging conditions.

Look for shops that understand **NB's specific climate challenges**. Quality custom makers use proper wood conditioning, account for seasonal movement, and recommend finishes that handle our 80% summer humidity and 15% winter indoor humidity. They'll also design around the structural quirks of older NB homes — uneven floors, plaster walls, and non-standard dimensions common in pre-1980 construction.

Finding the Right Shop for Your Project

The best custom cabinet makers typically have **8-16 week lead times** and require 50% deposits. They should provide detailed drawings, material specifications, and installation timelines. Ask to see recent installations and speak with past customers — quality shops are proud to share references.

Key questions to ask: Do they use solid wood frames or plywood? How do they handle seasonal wood movement? What's their warranty policy? Can they work with your contractor's timeline? Do they provide 3D renderings or just sketches?

Geographic Considerations

Moncton has the largest concentration of millwork shops, serving southeastern NB and PEI. Fredericton shops often specialize in heritage restoration work, given the city's historic architecture. Saint John's cabinet makers frequently work on waterfront properties, understanding moisture challenges better than most.

When Custom Makes Sense

Custom cabinets are worth the investment if you're staying in your home 10+ years, have an unusual layout, want specific wood species, or need to match existing millwork. For standard layouts with typical ceiling heights, semi-custom cabinets at \$10,000-\$18,000 might deliver 80% of the look for 60% of the cost.

Finding Local Cabinet Makers

New Brunswick Kitchens can connect you with vetted kitchen renovation contractors who work with quality local millwork shops. Many contractors have established relationships with specific cabinet makers, ensuring coordinated timelines and proper installation. The New Brunswick Construction Network includes contractors experienced with custom millwork integration.

Need help finding kitchen renovation contractors who work with local custom cabinet makers? New Brunswick Kitchens can match you with professionals familiar with NB's best millwork shops for a free consultation on your project.

Q3

How much does crown molding installation on kitchen cabinets cost in New Brunswick, and what profiles are most popular in Moncton and Saint John homes?

Crown molding installation on kitchen cabinets in New Brunswick typically costs \$8-18 per linear foot installed, with most kitchens requiring 25-35 linear feet for a total cost of \$200-630. The wide price range depends on the molding profile complexity, material choice, and whether your cabinets go to the ceiling or have a gap that needs to be filled.

Material and Labor Breakdown

The cost breaks down into materials (\$2-8 per linear foot) and installation labor (\$6-10 per linear foot). Basic MDF crown molding runs \$2-4 per foot, while solid wood profiles like maple or oak cost \$5-8 per foot. Installation labor varies based on complexity — simple cove molding is straightforward, while multi-piece traditional profiles require more cutting and fitting time.

Most NB contractors charge \$150-300 minimum for crown molding jobs, making it worthwhile to do the entire kitchen at once rather than piecemeal. If your cabinets don't reach the ceiling, you'll also need filler strips or a soffit box built first, adding \$3-6 per linear foot to bridge the gap.

Popular Profiles in Moncton and Saint John

Simple cove molding (2.5-3.5 inch) is the most popular choice in both cities, especially in Moncton's newer subdivisions and Saint John's renovated heritage homes. It provides a clean, finished look without overwhelming smaller kitchens common in NB's housing stock. This profile works well with both traditional and transitional cabinet styles.

Stepped or layered crown (4-5 inch total height) is gaining popularity in Saint John's upscale Rothesay area and Moncton's newer builds. This involves combining a smaller crown with a separate trim piece below, creating more visual depth. It's particularly effective on 42-inch upper cabinets with 9-foot ceilings.

Traditional ogee profiles remain popular in Saint John's heritage district renovations, where homeowners want period-appropriate details. These curved profiles cost more to install due to complex miters but complement the ornate woodwork found in century homes.

NB Climate Considerations

New Brunswick's humidity swings make material choice critical for crown molding. **MDF with painted finish** performs best in our Maritime climate — it doesn't expand and contract like solid wood, preventing gaps at joints during dry winter months. If you choose solid wood, ensure it's properly sealed on all sides before installation.

Many older NB homes have settled unevenly, making walls and ceilings slightly out of square. Experienced installers use caulk and careful scribing to hide these imperfections, but this adds time to the job.

DIY vs Professional Installation

Crown molding installation requires precise miter cuts and coping joints — mistakes are highly visible and waste expensive material. Most homeowners should hire a finish carpenter, especially for complex profiles or kitchens with multiple inside/outside corners. The specialized miter saw and coping saw techniques take practice to master.

However, if you have basic carpentry skills and a good miter saw, simple cove molding on a straight run of cabinets can be a DIY project. Practice your cuts on scrap pieces first.

Timing and Contractor Availability

Crown molding is typically installed after cabinets are in place but before countertop templating. Most finish carpenters in Moncton and Saint John can complete a typical kitchen crown installation in 4-8 hours. Book this work 2-3 weeks ahead during busy renovation season (May-October), or get better availability and potentially 10-15% lower pricing during winter months.

Need help finding a finish carpenter for your crown molding installation? New Brunswick Kitchens can match you with experienced local contractors for free estimates.

Looking for experienced contractors? The New Brunswick Construction Network connects homeowners with qualified professionals:

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- Thirty Four Renovations

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How much does it cost to mix open shelving with upper cabinets in a New Brunswick kitchen, and is it cheaper overall than a full cabinet installation?

Mixing open shelving with upper cabinets typically costs 15-25% less than full upper cabinets in New Brunswick kitchens, saving \$2,000-\$5,000 on a typical renovation while creating an airy, modern look.

The cost breakdown depends on how much shelving you incorporate. **Upper cabinets cost \$150-\$400 per linear foot** installed (including doors, hardware, and installation), while **floating shelves run \$50-\$150 per linear foot** for quality wood shelves with proper wall mounting. If you replace half your upper cabinets with open shelving, you're looking at savings of \$1,500-\$4,000 on a 12-foot kitchen wall.

Material costs for open shelving vary significantly based on your choices. Basic pine shelves from big box stores cost \$20-\$40 per linear foot, but they'll warp in New Brunswick's humidity swings. Better options include **maple or oak shelves at \$60-\$100 per linear foot**, or **custom-cut butcher block at \$80-\$120 per linear foot**. Professional installation adds \$30-\$50 per shelf for proper wall anchoring — critical in older NB homes where you might hit plaster-and-lath walls or need to locate studs behind multiple layers of renovations.

Open shelving works particularly well in New Brunswick's climate because it eliminates the moisture-trapping potential of upper cabinets. Maritime humidity can cause problems behind closed cabinet doors, especially around sinks and dishwashers. Open shelves allow air circulation and make it easier to spot any moisture issues early.

Strategic placement maximizes savings while maintaining functionality. Keep upper cabinets around the range (for storing oils and spices away from steam), near the sink (for dish storage), and in corners where shelves are awkward. Replace cabinets with shelving in areas where you display dishes, glassware, or decorative items. A popular NB approach is **upper cabinets on one wall, open shelving on the opposite wall** — this maintains storage while opening up sight lines.

Consider the maintenance reality before committing to extensive open shelving. Everything on display needs to look good constantly, and items collect dust and cooking grease. In busy NB family kitchens, this means more frequent cleaning. **Closed cabinets hide everyday clutter** that open shelves expose.

Installation requires proper wall anchoring, especially important in older New Brunswick homes. Floating shelves need to hit at least two wall studs, and in homes built before 1960, you might encounter plaster-and-lath construction that requires special anchoring techniques. Budget \$200-\$400 for professional installation of 4-6 shelves to ensure they're properly supported.

The sweet spot for most NB kitchens is replacing 30-40% of upper cabinets with open shelving — enough savings to make a budget difference while maintaining practical storage for items you don't want on display.

Need help finding a kitchen renovator who can design the perfect cabinet-and-shelving combination for your space? New Brunswick Kitchens can match you with local contractors experienced in mixed storage solutions.

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Q5

Is it cheaper to reface or replace kitchen cabinets in New Brunswick?

Refacing kitchen cabinets costs \$5,000 to \$12,000 in New Brunswick, compared to \$10,000 to \$25,000+ for full replacement — making refacing roughly 40-60% cheaper in most cases. However, the right choice depends on the condition of your existing cabinet boxes, whether your current layout works for you, and how long you plan to stay in the home.

Cabinet refacing involves keeping your existing cabinet boxes in place and replacing only the doors, drawer fronts, and visible end panels, then applying a new veneer or laminate to the face frames. Hardware is replaced, and you get an entirely new look without the cost and mess of a full tear-out. Refacing works beautifully when your cabinet boxes are still structurally sound — solid plywood or hardwood boxes from the 1980s and 1990s are often in excellent shape even if the doors look dated. Many NB homes from this era have cabinets that were overbuilt by today's standards.

Refacing does have limitations. You can't change your kitchen layout — the cabinets stay exactly where they are. You can't add soft-close hinges to old-style face-frame cabinets without modification. And if your existing boxes are particle board that's swollen from moisture (common under sinks in NB's humid climate), refacing won't fix the underlying problem. If more than two or three boxes have water damage, full replacement becomes the more practical option.

Full replacement means tearing out everything and installing new cabinets. Stock cabinets from big box stores run \$5,000 to \$10,000, semi-custom \$10,000 to \$18,000, and custom built by a local NB shop \$18,000 to \$25,000+. The advantage is a completely fresh start — new layout options, modern features like soft-close drawers, pull-out

shelving, and better use of corner spaces. If you've always wanted to move from a galley kitchen to an L-shape with an island, replacement is your only option.

Making the Decision

Choose **refacing** if your layout works well, cabinet boxes are solid, and you want a dramatic visual update on a budget. Refacing takes 3 to 5 days compared to 2 to 4 weeks for full replacement, meaning far less disruption to your daily life. Choose **replacement** if boxes are damaged, you need a layout change, you want modern cabinet features, or you're doing a comprehensive renovation that includes moving plumbing and electrical.

One NB-specific consideration: if you're refacing, choose your new door material carefully. Solid wood or painted MDF doors handle New Brunswick's extreme humidity swings far better than thermofoil. The dry winter air from forced heating (indoor humidity drops to 15-25%) causes thermofoil to peel and delaminate within 5 to 10 years — a frustrating outcome on a \$5,000 to \$12,000 investment.

Whichever route you choose, get at least three quotes from local contractors. Pricing varies significantly across New Brunswick. New Brunswick Kitchens can match you with kitchen renovation professionals for free estimates.

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Q6

What type of kitchen cabinets are best for New Brunswick's humidity?

MDF-core cabinets with a painted finish are the best all-around choice for New Brunswick's humidity swings, offering excellent moisture resistance through both the humid Maritime summers and bone-dry heated winters. Understanding why requires looking at what NB's climate actually does to kitchen cabinets over time.

New Brunswick kitchens face a unique double challenge that most other provinces don't experience as severely. During summer, Maritime humidity regularly pushes indoor levels above 60%, which can promote mold growth behind cabinets and cause wood to swell. Then in winter, forced-air heating drops indoor humidity to 15-25%,

causing materials to shrink and contract. This constant cycle of expansion and contraction is what destroys the wrong cabinet materials within 5-10 years.

Solid wood doors handle these swings better than most alternatives because wood is a natural material that flexes with humidity changes rather than cracking or delaminating. Maple, birch, and cherry are all popular choices in NB kitchens. The downside is cost — solid wood pushes you into the semi-custom or custom range at \$10,000-\$25,000 or more for a typical kitchen. If you go with solid wood, make sure the doors have proper frame-and-panel construction, which allows the centre panel to float and move with humidity changes without cracking.

MDF-core with painted finish is the sweet spot for most NB homeowners. MDF doesn't expand and contract the way solid wood does, and a quality paint finish seals the surface against moisture. This is why MDF painted cabinets dominate the mid-range market in Moncton, Fredericton, and Saint John. Expect to pay \$10,000-\$18,000 in the semi-custom range.

What to Avoid in NB

Thermofoil doors are the biggest risk in New Brunswick kitchens. Thermofoil is a vinyl wrap heat-bonded to an MDF core, and NB's dry winter air is its worst enemy. When indoor humidity drops below 20% — common in January and February with the furnace running — the vinyl can separate from the MDF, starting at the edges near the stove and dishwasher where heat is highest. Most thermofoil failures in NB happen within 5-10 years, and there is no practical repair once delamination starts.

Particleboard cabinet boxes are another concern. While plywood boxes hold up well to occasional moisture exposure under sinks and near dishwashers, particleboard swells and crumbles when it gets wet. Given how many NB homes deal with minor plumbing issues from aging galvanized pipes, plywood boxes are worth the upgrade.

For the cabinet interior, look for **plywood construction** with a melamine or thermofoil interior coating. This gives you structural strength from the plywood with moisture protection from the coating. Quality cabinet manufacturers serving the NB market will specify their box material — always ask.

One practical step that makes a real difference is ensuring your kitchen has proper ventilation. A range hood that vents to the outside — not a recirculating model — removes cooking moisture that would otherwise settle on cabinet surfaces. In NB's humid summers, this is especially important. Running a dehumidifier in summer and a humidifier in winter to keep indoor humidity between 35-45% year-round will extend the life of any cabinet material significantly.

If you are planning a cabinet purchase, getting quotes from multiple contractors lets you compare material options side by side. New Brunswick Kitchens can match you with local kitchen renovators who understand these climate considerations and can recommend the right materials for your budget.

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Should I choose plywood or particleboard cabinet boxes in NB?

Plywood cabinet boxes are the better choice for New Brunswick kitchens, and the extra cost is well justified given the Maritime humidity and the aging plumbing common in NB homes. The difference between these two materials becomes most apparent when moisture is involved — and in NB kitchens, moisture exposure is practically guaranteed.

Particleboard is made from wood particles bonded with resin and compressed into sheets. It is the standard box material in most stock and budget semi-custom cabinets, priced at \$5,000-\$10,000 for a typical kitchen. In a perfectly dry environment, particleboard performs adequately and can last 15-20 years. The problem is that NB kitchens are not perfectly dry environments. When particleboard gets wet — from a leaking dishwasher connection, a dripping sink supply line, or even prolonged condensation under a sink in a humid Moncton summer — it absorbs water and swells permanently. Once swollen, particleboard crumbles and cannot be repaired. The entire cabinet box must be replaced.

This is a real concern in New Brunswick because so many homes were built in the 1960s through 1990s with galvanized steel plumbing that corrodes internally over time. Even a slow drip from a compression fitting under the sink can destroy a particleboard cabinet base in a matter of weeks. If your home still has galvanized pipes, replacing them during a kitchen renovation is strongly recommended — but plywood boxes give you insurance against future leaks regardless.

Plywood is made from thin layers of wood veneer laminated together with the grain alternating direction. This cross-grain construction makes plywood dimensionally stable, meaning it resists swelling and warping when exposed to moisture. If a plywood cabinet box does get wet, it can dry out and return to its original shape in most cases. Plywood is also significantly stronger than particleboard — it holds screws better, supports heavier countertops, and withstands the daily wear of opening and closing doors and drawers.

The Cost Difference

Upgrading from particleboard to plywood boxes typically adds \$1,500-\$3,000 to a full kitchen cabinet order. On a mid-range renovation budget of \$25,000-\$45,000, that is a relatively modest investment for a material that will last the 20-25 year lifespan you should expect from quality cabinets. Most semi-custom cabinet lines in the \$10,000-\$18,000 range offer plywood as an upgrade option, and many custom cabinet makers in Fredericton, Saint John, and Moncton build exclusively with plywood.

One thing to check is the **cabinet interior finish**. Even plywood boxes benefit from a melamine or thermofoil interior coating that provides a smooth, cleanable, moisture-resistant surface. This is standard on most quality

cabinet lines but worth confirming.

If budget is tight and you must use particleboard boxes, take precautions: install a drip tray under the sink, check plumbing connections annually, and make sure your dishwasher supply line and drain are in good condition. But for most NB homeowners investing in a kitchen renovation that should last 15-20 years, plywood boxes are well worth the upgrade. Get matched with a kitchen renovator through New Brunswick Kitchens who can walk you through material options in person.

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Q8

What are the most popular cabinet door styles in New Brunswick kitchens?

Shaker-style doors dominate New Brunswick kitchens by a wide margin, followed by flat-panel (slab) doors for modern aesthetics and raised-panel doors in more traditional homes. The popularity of these styles reflects both design trends and practical considerations specific to the NB market.

Shaker doors feature a simple five-piece frame surrounding a flat recessed centre panel. This clean, versatile profile works equally well in a century-old Fredericton character home and a new-build subdivision in Dieppe. Shaker cabinets account for roughly 60-70% of kitchen renovations across the province right now, and for good reason — the style is timeless enough that it won't look dated in 10-15 years, it works with virtually any countertop and backsplash combination, and it is available at every price point from stock (\$5,000-\$10,000) through custom (\$18,000-\$25,000+). In NB's climate, shaker doors in solid maple or birch with a painted finish handle the seasonal humidity swings exceptionally well.

The most popular shaker finish in NB right now is **white or off-white painted**, which brightens kitchens in a province where winter daylight hours are short. Grey-painted shakers are the second most popular, followed by natural wood tones in walnut or oak stains. If you are choosing painted shaker doors, MDF-core panels with a quality lacquer or conversion-varnish finish offer the smoothest appearance without the wood grain telegraphing through the paint over time.

Flat-panel or slab doors are growing in popularity, especially among homeowners in Moncton and Saint John doing contemporary or mid-century modern renovations. These are simple flat surfaces with no frame or panel detail — clean lines that pair well with handleless push-to-open hardware or long bar pulls. Slab doors look stunning but show fingerprints and imperfections more readily than shaker profiles. In a matte finish, they are easier to maintain. Expect to pay semi-custom pricing of \$10,000-\$18,000 for quality slab cabinets since stock options in this style are limited in NB.

Raised-panel doors are the traditional choice — a frame with a centre panel that is bevelled and raised above the frame surface. This style is found in many NB kitchens built in the 1990s and 2000s and remains popular for homeowners who prefer a classic, formal look. Raised-panel doors in cherry or maple with a stain finish are the traditional choice, though painted raised-panel is also common. One practical consideration is that the detailed profiles collect grease and dust, making them slightly harder to clean than shaker or slab styles.

Styles to Think Twice About

Thermofoil doors in any style are a concern in New Brunswick. While the upfront cost is attractive — thermofoil shaker doors can save 20-30% versus painted MDF — NB's dry winter air causes the vinyl wrap to delaminate within 5-10 years, especially on doors near the oven or dishwasher. This is one of the most common cabinet failures kitchen contractors in the province deal with.

Cathedral or ornate arch-top doors have fallen significantly out of favour and can make a kitchen feel dated. If resale value matters to you, sticking with shaker or slab styles gives the broadest buyer appeal.

When choosing a door style, it helps to see samples in person under your kitchen's actual lighting. Many kitchen renovators in NB will bring door samples to your home. New Brunswick Kitchens can match you with local contractors who carry a range of door styles and finishes to compare.

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Q9

How long does cabinet refacing last compared to full replacement?

Quality cabinet refacing lasts 15-20 years when done properly, compared to 20-25 years or more for a full cabinet replacement — making refacing an excellent value when your existing cabinet boxes are still structurally sound. The key factor is the condition of what you are keeping.

Cabinet refacing involves replacing the doors, drawer fronts, and hardware while covering the visible face frames and end panels with a matching veneer or laminate. The existing cabinet boxes — the structural shells attached to your walls — stay in place. This means the longevity of a refacing job depends heavily on how solid those existing boxes are. If your boxes are plywood and were well-installed 15-20 years ago, they likely have another 15-20 years of life in them, making refacing a smart investment. If the boxes are particleboard and you have noticed swelling under the sink, warped shelves, or loose hinge screws that won't tighten, refacing is putting lipstick on a problem that will only get worse.

In New Brunswick, many homes built in the 1970s through 1990s have original kitchen cabinets with surprisingly solid plywood boxes but dated oak or laminate doors. These are ideal candidates for refacing. The typical cost of \$5,000-\$12,000 in the NB market saves you 40-60% compared to full cabinet replacement at \$10,000-\$25,000+, and the project takes just 3-5 days versus 2-4 weeks for a full replacement.

When Refacing Makes Sense

Refacing is the right choice when your cabinet layout already works well — meaning the locations, sizes, and configurations suit how you use your kitchen. Since refacing keeps the existing boxes in place, you cannot change the layout, add or remove cabinets, or reconfigure interior storage without additional work. If you are happy with where everything is but tired of the look, refacing delivers a dramatic visual transformation.

The new doors and drawer fronts you choose for refacing should be the same quality you would select for new cabinets. Solid wood or MDF-core painted doors perform best in NB's climate — avoid thermofoil replacement doors for the same delamination reasons that apply to new thermofoil cabinets. The veneer or laminate applied to the face frames should be professionally heat-bonded or contact-cemented with tight seams, especially important in NB where humidity swings can lift poorly adhered veneer.

When Full Replacement Is Worth It

Full replacement is the better investment when any of these conditions apply: your cabinet boxes are particleboard and showing moisture damage, your current layout does not work (wanting to add an island, change the sink location, or open up a wall), your cabinets are not plumb and level (making new doors fit poorly), or you are already doing major electrical and plumbing work that involves opening walls behind the cabinets.

Full replacement also makes more sense when you factor in other upgrades. If you are spending \$60,000+ on a gut renovation with new countertops, flooring, backsplash, and appliances, investing in new cabinet boxes ensures everything in the kitchen has the same 20-25 year lifespan. Mixing 25-year-old boxes with brand-new everything else means the boxes become the weak link.

A kitchen renovation contractor can assess your existing cabinet boxes in person and give you an honest recommendation. Getting quotes for both refacing and replacement lets you compare the cost difference against the condition of what you have. New Brunswick Kitchens can match you with local renovators who offer both services for a free estimate.

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Are soft-close hinges and drawers worth the upgrade in NB kitchens?

Soft-close hinges and drawer slides are absolutely worth the upgrade and are one of the best small investments in a kitchen renovation — typically adding only \$300-\$800 to the total cabinet cost while dramatically improving daily usability and long-term durability. Most semi-custom and custom cabinet manufacturers now include soft-close as standard, so this is primarily a question for homeowners choosing stock cabinets or retrofitting existing kitchens.

Soft-close mechanisms use a hydraulic damper built into the hinge or drawer slide that catches the door or drawer in the last few centimetres of travel and pulls it gently shut. The immediate benefit is obvious — no more slamming. But the real value goes beyond noise reduction. Every time a cabinet door slams, the impact vibrates through the hinge, the face frame, and the cabinet box. Over 15-20 years of daily use, that repeated impact loosens hinge screws, chips door edges, and stresses the box joints. Soft-close eliminates this wear entirely, extending the life of your cabinets by years.

In New Brunswick homes with families, the noise reduction alone justifies the cost. An average kitchen has 20-30 doors and 10-15 drawers — that is dozens of daily slams eliminated. For open-concept layouts where the kitchen opens to living spaces, which are increasingly popular in Moncton and Fredericton renovations, the quiet operation is even more noticeable.

For new cabinet installations, soft-close is included in virtually all semi-custom (\$10,000-\$18,000) and custom (\$18,000-\$25,000+) cabinet lines. If you are choosing stock cabinets in the \$5,000-\$10,000 range, some lines include soft-close and others charge a modest upgrade fee of \$3-\$5 per hinge and \$10-\$20 per drawer slide. On a kitchen with 25 doors and 12 drawers, that is roughly \$200-\$400 — a negligible amount on a renovation budget.

For retrofitting existing cabinets, you can add soft-close to most standard hinges and drawer slides without replacing the entire cabinet. Soft-close hinge adapters clip onto existing European-style (concealed) hinges for about \$3-\$5 each. If your cabinets use older exposed hinges, you will need to swap them for concealed hinges, which a handy homeowner can do with a Forstner bit and a drill. Soft-close drawer slide replacements run \$15-\$40 per pair depending on the length and weight rating. A full kitchen retrofit with quality hardware runs \$300-\$600 in parts, and a contractor would charge \$500-\$1,200 installed.

The one consideration is that soft-close mechanisms need occasional adjustment. Over time, especially through NB's seasonal temperature and humidity changes, you may notice doors not closing fully or closing too slowly. A simple adjustment screw on the hinge controls the closing speed and tension — this is a 30-second fix with a screwdriver that any homeowner can handle.

Undermount drawer slides with soft-close are a further upgrade worth considering over side-mount slides. Undermount slides are hidden beneath the drawer box, giving you the full width of the drawer interior and a cleaner look. They cost \$30-\$60 per pair versus \$15-\$30 for side-mount, but they are smoother, quieter, and hold more weight. For deep pot drawers and heavy cutlery drawers, undermount slides rated for 75-100 pounds are well worth it.

If you are getting quotes on a kitchen renovation, ask whether soft-close is included or an upgrade. Any contractor who does not offer soft-close as at least an option is likely working with very basic product lines.

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Q11

What is the difference between stock semi-custom and custom cabinets?

Stock cabinets are pre-built in standard sizes and ship immediately, semi-custom cabinets offer more size and finish options with a 4-8 week lead time, and custom cabinets are built to your exact specifications by a local shop over 8-16 weeks. The differences come down to sizing flexibility, material quality, finish options, and — most significantly — price.

Stock cabinets (\$5,000-\$10,000 for a typical NB kitchen) are mass-produced in standard widths — usually 9, 12, 15, 18, 21, 24, 30, 33, and 36 inches. They come in a limited selection of door styles and finishes, typically available off the shelf or within 1-2 weeks. The advantage is speed and cost. The limitation is that your kitchen dimensions may not divide evenly into standard sizes, requiring filler strips at the ends that can look awkward if not handled carefully. Stock cabinets are available at big box stores across NB and are a solid choice for straightforward galley or L-shaped layouts where standard sizes fit well. Box construction is typically particleboard with melamine coating — functional but less durable than plywood, particularly around sinks in NB's humid climate.

Semi-custom cabinets (\$10,000-\$18,000) are where most NB kitchen renovations land. Semi-custom lines are built to order from a manufacturer's catalogue, offering dozens of door styles, wood species, paint colours, and stain options. The critical advantage over stock is **sizing flexibility** — semi-custom cabinets can be ordered in 1/8-

inch increments in width, with varying heights and depths, meaning your kitchen can be fitted precisely without filler strips. You also get better construction: plywood boxes are commonly available, soft-close hardware is usually standard, and drawer boxes are solid wood or plywood rather than stapled particleboard. Lead time is 4-8 weeks from order to delivery, so plan accordingly — in NB, ordering by March or April ensures a summer installation.

Custom cabinets (\$18,000-\$25,000+) are built from scratch by a local cabinet shop to your exact specifications. There are no catalogues or standard options — every dimension, material, finish, joint, and detail is decided by you and the builder. Custom is the right choice when your kitchen has unusual dimensions (old Fredericton or Saint John homes with non-square walls, varying ceiling heights, or odd alcoves), when you want a specific wood species or finish that semi-custom lines do not offer, or when you need specialized storage solutions built in. Custom cabinet makers in NB typically have 8-16 week lead times, and many are booked months in advance during the busy May-October renovation season.

How to Decide

The decision often comes down to your kitchen's layout complexity and your budget. If your kitchen has standard dimensions and you are doing a straightforward replacement on a budget, stock cabinets with plywood box upgrades deliver good value. If you want a tailored fit with quality materials and have a mid-range budget, semi-custom hits the sweet spot — this is the most popular choice for NB kitchen renovations. If you have an older home with non-standard dimensions, want a truly unique kitchen, or are investing in a high-end remodel (\$50,000+), custom cabinets are worth every dollar.

One important consideration for NB specifically: **material selection matters more than cabinet tier** in our climate. A semi-custom cabinet with MDF-core painted doors and plywood boxes will outperform a custom cabinet with thermofoil doors and particleboard boxes in NB's humidity swings. Focus on the right materials first, then choose the tier that fits your budget and layout needs.

Getting quotes at all three levels lets you see the actual price differences for your specific kitchen. New Brunswick Kitchens can match you with renovators who carry multiple cabinet lines to compare options side by side.

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How do thermofoil cabinet doors perform in NB's climate?

Thermofoil cabinet doors are one of the riskiest material choices for New Brunswick kitchens, and most experienced local renovators will steer you away from them. The combination of NB's dry heated winters and heat-generating kitchen appliances creates the exact conditions that cause thermofoil to fail prematurely.

Thermofoil is a thin vinyl film that is heated and vacuum-pressed onto an MDF (medium-density fibreboard) core. When new, thermofoil doors look smooth and clean, are easy to wipe down, and cost 20-30% less than painted MDF or solid wood doors in the same style. That price advantage is why they remain tempting — and why homeowners continue to be disappointed by them 5-10 years later.

The failure mechanism is straightforward. **NB's forced-air heating systems drop indoor humidity to 15-25% during the winter months.** At these levels, the MDF core shrinks slightly. The vinyl film, which does not shrink at the same rate, begins to lift at the edges and corners where the bond is weakest. This delamination typically starts on doors adjacent to the oven and dishwasher, where heat accelerates the process. Once a corner lifts, the peeling continues — and there is no practical repair. The door must be replaced entirely.

In the summer, NB's Maritime humidity pushes indoor levels above 60%, causing the MDF to swell back. This seasonal cycle of expansion and contraction stresses the vinyl bond repeatedly, and each cycle weakens it further. Cabinet doors near exterior walls experience even greater temperature variation, compounding the problem.

What NB Homeowners Experience

The typical timeline for thermofoil failure in a New Brunswick kitchen is 5-10 years, though doors near heat sources can start peeling in as few as 3-4 years. By contrast, quality painted MDF or solid wood doors routinely last 15-25 years in the same conditions. The math is clear: spending \$10,000 on thermofoil doors that last 7 years costs more per year than spending \$14,000 on painted MDF doors that last 20 years.

The most common complaint kitchen contractors in Moncton, Fredericton, and Saint John hear is homeowners wanting to replace thermofoil doors installed during a renovation just 5-8 years earlier. Since the vinyl wraps the entire door including edges, replacement doors must match the exact profile — and if the manufacturer has changed or discontinued the style, matching is impossible. This often forces a full door replacement for the entire kitchen to maintain a consistent look, at a cost of \$4,000-\$8,000.

Better Alternatives at Similar Price Points

MDF-core with painted finish is the direct competitor to thermofoil and costs only 15-25% more. A quality lacquer or conversion-varnish finish on MDF is mechanically bonded to the surface, does not peel, and handles NB's

humidity swings without issue. Paint can be touched up if chipped, unlike thermofoil which cannot be repaired. This is the recommended mid-range choice for NB kitchens.

High-pressure laminate (HPL) doors are another option in a similar price range. HPL is more resistant to heat and humidity than thermofoil, though the style options are more limited.

If you are shopping for cabinets and a quote comes in significantly lower than others, check whether thermofoil doors are the reason. The upfront savings are real, but the long-term cost in NB's climate makes thermofoil a poor investment. Any kitchen renovator familiar with New Brunswick conditions will confirm this — get matched with local contractors through New Brunswick Kitchens for honest material recommendations.

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Can I paint my existing oak cabinets instead of replacing them?

Yes, painting existing oak cabinets is one of the most cost-effective kitchen upgrades available to NB homeowners, and the results can be dramatic — transforming a dated 1990s kitchen for \$1,500-\$4,000 compared to \$10,000-\$25,000 for new cabinets. The catch is that proper preparation is critical, and cutting corners on prep is the number one reason painted cabinets fail.

Oak cabinets were installed in a huge number of New Brunswick homes built between 1985 and 2005. The wood itself is extremely durable — oak cabinet boxes from this era are often solid and structurally sound even after 25-30 years. What makes them look dated is the heavy grain pattern and the honey or golden finish that has gone out of style. Painting over that grain and colour with a modern white, grey, or navy finish updates the entire kitchen instantly.

The Right Process

The key to a lasting paint job on oak is preparation. Oak has a pronounced open grain that shows through paint if not properly filled. Here is the process that produces professional results:

Surface preparation starts with removing all doors, drawer fronts, and hardware. Clean every surface with a degreaser — 20-30 years of cooking grease builds up in ways you cannot see. Then sand all surfaces with 120-150 grit sandpaper or a liquid deglosser to break the existing finish and create tooth for the primer. Fill the open oak grain with a grain filler product, sanding smooth once dry. This grain-filling step is what separates a professional-looking result from a DIY job that still shows wood texture.

Priming with a high-adhesion bonding primer is non-negotiable. Shellac-based primers like BIN or high-quality acrylic bonding primers block the tannins in oak that bleed through regular primers as yellowish stains — a very common problem with oak. Apply one to two coats, sanding lightly between coats with 220 grit.

Painting with a quality cabinet-grade paint in two to three thin coats delivers the best finish. Alkyd-hybrid (water-based with alkyd resin) paints like Benjamin Moore Advance or Sherwin-Williams Emerald Urethane level beautifully and cure to a hard, durable finish. Allow proper cure time between coats as specified on the can — rushing this step causes adhesion failure.

Cure time is the step most homeowners underestimate. Cabinet paint takes 2-4 weeks to fully cure and harden, even though it feels dry to the touch within hours. During the cure period, doors should be stored flat and not reinstalled until the paint has hardened enough to resist the friction of daily opening and closing. In NB's humid summers, cure times may run longer.

This is a project a capable DIYer can tackle over a long weekend, though the results depend entirely on patience and preparation. The cost for a DIY job runs \$200-\$600 in materials (primer, paint, grain filler, sandpaper, brushes or a sprayer rental). Hiring a professional cabinet painter in NB runs \$1,500-\$4,000 depending on the kitchen size, and the finish quality is noticeably better — professionals typically spray rather than brush, producing a smoother result without brush marks.

One honest word of caution: if your oak doors have a cathedral or arched profile, painting them will update the colour but the dated shape will still read as 1990s. In that case, consider **cabinet refacing** (\$5,000-\$12,000) which replaces the doors and drawer fronts with a modern shaker or slab style while keeping the solid oak boxes.

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Q14

What kitchen cabinet organizers are worth the investment?

Pull-out shelves, lazy Susans for corner cabinets, and deep drawer dividers deliver the highest return on investment for NB kitchen cabinet organizers — turning wasted dead space into fully accessible storage.

The best organizers solve specific problems that every kitchen has, and a well-organized kitchen feels larger without changing the footprint.

The single most impactful organizer is a **pull-out shelf system** for base cabinets. Standard base cabinets are 24 inches deep, and items stored at the back are essentially invisible and inaccessible. Pull-out shelves on full-extension slides bring everything to you with one motion. At \$50-\$150 per shelf for aftermarket kits or \$80-\$200 installed by a contractor, outfitting your 4-6 base cabinets with pull-out shelves costs \$400-\$1,200 and transforms daily usability. These are especially valuable for NB homeowners aging in place — no more kneeling to dig through dark cabinet interiors.

Corner cabinet solutions are the second-highest priority. Corner base cabinets waste an enormous amount of space in L-shaped and U-shaped kitchens — the two most common layouts in NB homes. A lazy Susan (\$80-\$200 installed) uses the most common approach, providing two or three rotating shelves. A blind-corner pull-out system

(\$200-\$400 installed) is more expensive but provides better access by sliding the interior shelf forward and sideways. If you are doing a full renovation, a corner drawer system is the premium option — three angled drawers that use nearly 100% of the corner space — but these require custom or semi-custom cabinets.

Deep drawer dividers and peg systems are essential for pot-and-pan drawers and dish drawers. Large deep drawers without dividers become a jumbled mess within weeks. Wooden peg systems (\$30-\$80 per drawer) let you configure vertical dividers to hold plates upright, separate cutting boards, and organize baking sheets. For cutlery drawers, two-tier inserts (\$40-\$100) double the storage by adding a sliding upper tray.

Under-sink organizers deserve special mention for NB kitchens. The space under the sink is often wasted because of the plumbing in the way, and in NB's humid climate, this dark, damp area is prone to mold if items are packed tightly and airflow is blocked. A U-shaped pull-out caddy (\$60-\$150) works around the pipes while keeping cleaning supplies accessible and allowing air circulation. Consider adding a small battery-powered leak detector (\$15-\$25) under the sink as well — catching a leak from aging plumbing early prevents serious cabinet damage.

Organizers to Skip

Not every trendy organizer is worth the money. **Spice rack pull-outs** built into narrow 6-inch cabinets sound good but hold surprisingly few items and the slides can jam. A simple door-mounted spice rack (\$15-\$30) works just as well. **Appliance garages** with roll-up doors were popular in the 2000s but make the counter area they sit on unusable and look dated. **Pull-down upper cabinet shelves** (\$200-\$400 each) are expensive for what they deliver — step stools are cheaper.

If you are planning a kitchen renovation, discuss organizer options with your contractor early in the design phase. Incorporating pull-outs and dividers into new semi-custom or custom cabinets during construction costs significantly less than retrofitting them later. New Brunswick Kitchens can connect you with local kitchen renovators who include storage planning as part of their design process.

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Q15

How do I choose between white and wood-tone cabinets for my NB kitchen?

White cabinets remain the most popular choice in New Brunswick kitchens for their ability to brighten spaces during long, dark Maritime winters, while wood-tone cabinets are making a strong comeback for homeowners wanting warmth and character. Both are excellent choices — the right one depends on your kitchen's natural light, your home's overall style, and how much maintenance you are willing to do.

White cabinets dominate the NB market for practical reasons beyond just trend. New Brunswick gets significantly less winter daylight than southern Ontario, and many NB homes — especially those built in the 1970s through 1990s — have smaller kitchen windows than modern builds. White cabinets reflect available light, making a kitchen feel larger and brighter. In galley kitchens common in older Saint John row houses and Moncton bungalows, this effect is substantial. White also pairs with virtually any countertop, backsplash, and flooring combination, giving you maximum flexibility.

The practical considerations of white in NB: fingerprints, grease marks, and cooking splatter show more readily on white surfaces, meaning more frequent wiping. For families with young children, a warm white or off-white (like Benjamin Moore Simply White or White Dove) hides daily grime better than a pure bright white. In NB's climate, white painted MDF-core doors perform very well — the paint seals the MDF against humidity swings, and minor chips can be touched up with matching paint. Avoid white thermofoil, which will yellow near heat sources and delaminate in NB's dry winters.

Wood-tone cabinets are experiencing a genuine resurgence after a decade of all-white kitchens. Natural walnut, white oak, and rift-cut oak in clear or light stains bring warmth and texture that white cannot replicate. In NB homes with hardwood floors, wood beams, or stone fireplaces, wood-tone cabinets create a cohesive, warm aesthetic that feels distinctly Maritime. The move away from the honey-golden oak of the 1990s toward cooler, flatter wood tones means today's wood cabinets look entirely different from what you might be replacing.

Wood-tone considerations for NB: natural wood shows the effects of humidity changes more visibly than painted finishes. Solid wood doors in NB's climate will develop fine movement lines at panel joints — this is normal and expected, not a defect. Choosing a wood species with tighter grain (maple, birch) shows this less than wider-grained species (oak, ash). Wood-tone cabinets in semi-custom lines run \$10,000-\$18,000, comparable to painted options in the same tier.

The Two-Tone Option

A growing trend in Fredericton and Moncton kitchens is **two-tone cabinets** — white uppers with wood-tone or coloured lowers, or a contrasting island colour. This approach gives you the light-reflecting benefits of white on the upper cabinets where they brighten the room while adding warmth and visual weight at the base. The island is a

natural place to introduce a contrasting tone since it reads as a separate piece of furniture. Two-tone layouts work best with clean profiles like shaker doors where the simplicity keeps the colour contrast from feeling busy.

Making Your Decision

Consider these factors: How much natural light does your kitchen receive? Kitchens with north-facing windows or limited glazing benefit more from white. What is the style of the rest of your home? A 1920s Fredericton home with character details often suits wood tones, while a modern open-concept build may lean white. How long do you plan to stay? White has the broadest resale appeal, while wood tones make a more personal statement.

Visiting kitchen showrooms in person is the best way to compare — colours and wood tones look different under showroom lighting versus your kitchen's lighting. Ask your contractor for large door samples to take home and view in your actual space. New Brunswick Kitchens can match you with renovators who carry multiple finish options for side-by-side comparison.

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What are the most durable cabinet finishes for high-use kitchens?

The most durable cabinet finishes for high-use New Brunswick kitchens are **catalyzed conversion varnish over MDF-core doors, followed closely by factory-applied acrylic paint finishes**. These finishes resist chipping, moisture damage, and the constant humidity swings that NB's Maritime climate throws at kitchen cabinets year-round.

Conversion varnish is what most quality NB cabinet shops use on their custom and semi-custom lines. Unlike polyurethane or standard lacquer, it chemically cross-links as it cures, creating an extremely hard shell that resists fingerprints, cleaning chemicals, and the repeated moisture exposure that happens around sinks and dishwashers. For a high-traffic kitchen where doors are opened dozens of times a day — especially with kids — this finish holds up for 15 to 20 years without visible wear. Expect to pay within the custom cabinet range of \$18,000 to \$25,000 or more for a full kitchen with this level of finish quality.

For homeowners working within a mid-range budget, **MDF-core doors with a factory-sprayed paint finish** are the sweet spot for NB conditions. MDF does not expand and contract with humidity changes the way solid wood does, so the painted surface stays smooth and crack-free through our dry winters (when indoor humidity drops to 15-25%) and humid summers. This is a critical advantage over solid wood painted cabinets, which tend to show hairline cracks at joints within a few years in New Brunswick homes. Semi-custom painted MDF cabinets run \$10,000 to \$18,000 and deliver excellent durability for everyday family use.

Finishes to Be Cautious About

Thermofoil is one finish to avoid in NB high-use kitchens despite its low price point. The vinyl film is heat-bonded to MDF, and the dry winter air from forced-air heating systems — common across Moncton, Fredericton, and Saint John homes — causes the adhesive to weaken over time. Delamination typically starts around the dishwasher and oven within 5 to 10 years, and once it begins, there is no repair — only replacement. Similarly, rigid thermolaminate (RTF) can bubble near heat sources.

Stained solid wood is durable in terms of wear resistance, but in NB's climate, the wood movement causes visible finish cracks at rail-and-stile joints. If you prefer a wood-grain look, consider a wood-grain textured melamine or a high-pressure laminate slab door — these mimic the appearance without the seasonal movement issues.

For the absolute highest durability in a family kitchen, look for cabinets finished with **two coats of primer and two coats of catalyzed paint, sanded between coats**. Ask your cabinet maker specifically about the finish system they use — a reputable NB shop will tell you exactly what product line they spray. Factory-applied finishes are always more durable than field-applied (brush or roller) finishes because the controlled spray environment produces

a more even, harder coat.

When comparing quotes from kitchen renovators, ask about finish warranty separately from the cabinet box warranty. A quality finish should carry a 5-year minimum warranty against peeling, chipping, and discolouration. Getting three or more quotes is essential in New Brunswick, where pricing can vary 30-40% between contractors for the same scope of work.

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Q17

How long does it take to order and install custom cabinets in NB?

From initial design consultation to finished installation, custom cabinets in New Brunswick typically take 12 to 22 weeks total — with 8 to 16 weeks for fabrication and 3 to 5 days for installation. The timeline depends heavily on design complexity, your cabinet maker's current workload, and whether your project involves any structural or mechanical changes that need to happen first.

The process starts with a **design and measurement phase**, which usually takes 1 to 3 weeks. A good kitchen designer or custom cabinet shop will do an in-home measurement, discuss your layout preferences, door styles, finish colours, and storage needs, then produce detailed drawings for your approval. In Moncton, Fredericton, and Saint John, several local cabinet shops handle this in-house. If you are in a more rural area, expect an extra week or two for the initial site visit and follow-up revisions.

Once you approve the design and place your deposit (typically 40-50% down), the **fabrication phase** begins. Custom NB cabinet shops generally quote 8 to 16 weeks for production, depending on the season and complexity. Simple shaker-style painted MDF doors sit on the faster end, while intricate glazed finishes, built-in pantry systems, or unusual wood species push toward 16 weeks or longer. If you are planning a summer renovation, ordering by February or March is essential — cabinet shops get their heaviest order volumes in spring, and lead times stretch accordingly.

Installation Timeline

Cabinet installation itself takes 3 to 5 days for a typical NB kitchen (10 to 12 linear feet of base and upper cabinets). This includes scribing cabinets to walls that are not perfectly plumb (extremely common in NB homes built before the 1990s), shimming, levelling, securing to studs, and installing all hardware. Crown moulding, filler strips, and decorative panels can add another day.

However, installation cannot begin until all prerequisite work is complete. If your renovation involves electrical upgrades (moving outlets, adding circuits), plumbing rough-in changes (relocating the sink or adding a dishwasher line), or structural modifications (removing a wall for an open-concept layout), that work must be done, inspected, and closed up before cabinets go in. In New Brunswick, rough-in inspections through your municipality or Regional Service Commission take 1 to 3 weeks to schedule in cities and 2 to 5 weeks in RSC areas, so factor that into your overall timeline.

After cabinets are installed, **countertop templating** happens — the fabricator comes in to laser-measure your installed cabinets for a precise fit. Quartz and granite countertops then take an additional 3 to 6 weeks to fabricate and install. This means your kitchen will be without countertops for that period, so plan accordingly.

To keep the project on track, finalize your appliance selections before ordering cabinets — cabinet dimensions must match appliance specs exactly. Order appliances 4 to 8 weeks ahead, as delivery to New Brunswick takes longer than to major urban centres. A realistic start-to-finish timeline for a full custom kitchen renovation in NB is 5 to 7 months from first consultation to cooking your first meal.

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Q18

What pantry designs work best for NB families?

A well-designed pantry is one of the most requested features in New Brunswick kitchen renovations, and the best design depends on your available space, family size, and cooking habits. For most NB homes, a

combination of pull-out drawers and adjustable shelving inside a dedicated pantry cabinet delivers the most practical everyday storage.

Pantry Styles for NB Homes

The **tall pantry cabinet** (84" or 96" height) is the most popular option in NB kitchen renovations, typically running \$1,200-\$3,500 depending on whether you choose stock, semi-custom, or custom cabinetry. These floor-to-ceiling units maximize vertical space, which matters in many NB homes where kitchen square footage is modest. The best configurations use pull-out shelves or roll-out trays on full-extension drawer slides so you can see and reach everything without digging. A 24"-deep, 36"-wide tall pantry with five or six pull-out shelves holds an impressive amount of groceries.

If your layout allows it, a **walk-in pantry** is the gold standard. Even a small closet-sized space (4' x 4') with U-shaped shelving gives you more accessible storage than any cabinet. In older NB homes, you can sometimes convert an adjacent hallway closet or underused mudroom space into a walk-in pantry during a renovation. This typically adds \$2,000-\$5,000 depending on whether you need to frame new walls, add lighting, and install custom shelving.

For smaller NB kitchens where a full pantry cabinet won't fit, a **pull-out pantry** (also called a chef's pantry or tall pull-out) is an excellent solution. These narrow units, often just 9"-15" wide, slide out to reveal storage on both sides. They fit into tight spaces beside refrigerators or ranges and cost \$800-\$2,000 installed.

One NB-specific consideration is **moisture control**. Maritime humidity in summer can affect dry goods stored in pantries, especially if the pantry shares an exterior wall. Make sure your pantry area has adequate air circulation, and consider a small dehumidifier rod or moisture absorbers in walk-in pantries. In winter, the dry heated air is less of a concern for stored food, but solid wood pantry shelving can shrink slightly, so adjustable shelf pins are always preferable to fixed shelves.

For families in Moncton, Fredericton, and Saint John, where busy schedules demand efficient meal prep, adding a **countertop section** inside your pantry gives you a landing zone for small appliances like stand mixers, bread machines, and Instant Pots. Include an electrical outlet inside the pantry so these appliances can stay plugged in and ready to use without cluttering your main countertops.

When planning your pantry, measure your typical grocery haul and think about what you actually store. Families with kids in activities tend to stock more grab-and-go snacks, while those who cook from scratch need space for bulk dry goods, oils, and spices. A good kitchen designer or renovator can customize shelf heights and configurations to match your habits. Getting three quotes from local contractors will help you find the right balance between your dream pantry and your renovation budget.

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How do I choose kitchen hardware that matches my cabinet style?

The right hardware pulls your entire kitchen together visually, and the key is matching the hardware style, scale, and finish to your cabinet door profile and overall kitchen aesthetic. Hardware is one of the most affordable upgrades in a kitchen renovation, typically running \$200-\$800 for a full set, so it is worth taking the time to get it right.

Start with your **cabinet door style**. Shaker-style doors, which are the most popular choice in NB kitchens right now, pair well with simple bar pulls or cup pulls in brushed nickel, matte black, or brass. The clean lines of a shaker door look cluttered with overly ornate hardware, so lean toward understated designs. Raised-panel traditional doors, common in many older NB homes, can handle more decorative hardware with curves and detailing. Flat-slab modern doors look best with sleek, minimal bar pulls or even integrated edge pulls that keep the surface completely clean.

Scale matters more than most homeowners realize. A general rule is to use pulls that are roughly one-third the width of the drawer front. For a standard 15" drawer, a 5" pull works well. For wider drawers (24"-36"), step up to 8"-12" pulls or use two pulls spaced evenly. On upper cabinet doors, knobs work fine since you are just pulling the door open, but lower cabinets and drawers benefit from pulls that give you a better grip, especially with wet or greasy hands during cooking.

Finish coordination is where hardware ties your kitchen together. Your hardware finish should complement your faucet, light fixtures, and appliance handles. If you have stainless steel appliances and a brushed nickel faucet, brushed nickel or stainless hardware creates a cohesive look. Matte black hardware pairs beautifully with black stainless appliances and black faucets, and it is extremely popular in New Brunswick kitchens right now. Brushed brass or gold hardware adds warmth and works well with white or painted cabinets, though it is a bolder choice that may feel dated sooner.

Before committing, **order samples**. Most hardware suppliers let you order two or three sample pieces for a few dollars each. Hold them against your actual cabinet doors in your kitchen lighting, not under store fluorescents. What looks perfect in a showroom can look completely different in your Fredericton bungalow or Saint John Victorian. Live with the samples for a few days, opening and closing them to test comfort.

For NB homeowners doing a cabinet refresh rather than a full renovation, swapping hardware is one of the simplest and most impactful DIY projects. Just be aware that if your new hardware has a different hole spacing than the old, you will need to fill the old holes with wood filler, sand, and touch up the paint or finish before drilling new ones. This is straightforward DIY work that most homeowners can handle with basic tools and patience.

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Q20

What are the pros and cons of open shelving in NB kitchens?

Open shelving can look stunning in a kitchen, but in New Brunswick's Maritime climate it comes with practical challenges that closed cabinetry does not. Before committing to open shelves, NB homeowners need to weigh the visual appeal against the reality of dust, humidity, and daily maintenance.

The **advantages** of open shelving are real. It makes a small kitchen feel larger and more open by eliminating the visual weight of upper cabinet boxes. It costs significantly less than upper cabinets, with floating wood shelves running \$50-\$150 per shelf installed versus \$200-\$500 per linear foot for upper cabinets. Open shelving also forces you to curate and organize, which can create a beautiful display of your favourite dishes, glassware, and cookbooks. In older NB homes with character and charm, open shelving with reclaimed wood brackets fits the aesthetic perfectly.

However, the **drawbacks in New Brunswick are significant.** Maritime humidity during summer means everything on open shelves collects a fine layer of moisture and dust faster than you might expect. Items you do not use daily will need regular washing just to stay presentable. Grease from cooking also settles on open shelves, especially near the range, creating a sticky film on dishes and decorative items that requires frequent cleaning. If your kitchen does not have a properly vented range hood exhausting to the outside (not a recirculating fan), this problem is much worse.

The **dry winter air** in NB presents another issue. Solid wood open shelves can shrink and develop small gaps where they meet the wall during heating season when indoor humidity drops to 15-25%. Floating shelf brackets can also loosen slightly as the wood contracts. This is not a structural concern, but you may notice seasonal movement.

A Practical Compromise

Many NB kitchen designers recommend a **hybrid approach**: open shelving on one wall section for display pieces you use and wash regularly, with closed upper cabinets for everything else. This gives you the visual lightness of open shelving without sacrificing practical storage. A common layout is open shelves flanking a window above the sink, with traditional uppers on the remaining walls.

If you do choose open shelving, keep these tips in mind. Place them away from the range to minimize grease exposure. Use them for items you reach for daily so nothing sits long enough to collect dust. Choose a durable finish like sealed hardwood or painted MDF that can be wiped down easily. And install a quality range hood vented to the exterior, which you should have regardless but which becomes absolutely essential with open shelving.

Open shelving is a relatively easy DIY project for NB homeowners comfortable with a drill and stud finder. Floating shelf brackets rated for 50+ pounds, screwed into studs, will hold dishes safely. Budget \$150-\$500 for a set of three to four shelves with hardware. For anything more complex, like integrated lighting or custom millwork shelving, a local kitchen renovator can ensure everything is level, secure, and finished beautifully.

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What are the best places to buy kitchen cabinets in New Brunswick?

New Brunswick homeowners have four main channels for buying kitchen cabinets: local custom cabinet shops, kitchen design showrooms, big box retailers, and online suppliers. Each serves a different budget and quality level, and the best choice depends on your priorities for customization, timeline, and price.

Local custom cabinet shops are New Brunswick's strongest option for quality and fit. Moncton, Fredericton, and Saint John each have established cabinet makers who build to your exact specifications — any size, finish, wood species, and configuration. Custom cabinets run \$18,000-\$25,000+ for a typical kitchen with an 8-16 week lead time, but you get cabinets built specifically for NB's climate conditions. A good local shop will use construction methods that account for our humidity swings — solid wood frames with MDF-core painted doors that resist the cracking and warping caused by dry winter heating and humid Maritime summers. Ask about their joinery (dovetail

drawers are a quality indicator), hinge and slide hardware brands (Blum and Hettich are top tier), and whether they include installation.

Kitchen design showrooms in NB's larger cities carry semi-custom cabinet lines from national manufacturers. Semi-custom cabinets offer a wide range of door styles, finishes, and sizes with modifications available — more options than stock but at a lower price point than full custom, typically \$10,000-\$18,000 with a 4-8 week lead time. These showrooms usually offer full design services, creating 3D layouts and handling measurements, which is valuable if you're changing your kitchen layout. Many include installation in their pricing or work with trusted installation crews.

Stock and Budget Options

Big box retailers — the major home improvement chains with locations in Moncton, Fredericton, and Saint John — carry stock cabinet lines starting at \$5,000-\$10,000 for a kitchen. Stock cabinets come in standard 3-inch-increment widths and limited finishes, but they're available within 1-2 weeks and the price is hard to beat. The trade-off is quality: most stock cabinets use particleboard construction, stapled joints, and lower-grade hardware. In New Brunswick's climate, particleboard is more vulnerable to moisture damage under sinks and near dishwashers. If you go this route, upgrade to plywood-box options where available and pay close attention to the hinge and drawer slide quality.

Online cabinet suppliers offer aggressive pricing but come with significant risks for NB buyers. Shipping costs to New Brunswick eat into the savings — cabinets are heavy and bulky, and damage during shipping is common. You can't see or feel the product before buying, returns are expensive, and you'll need to hire a separate local installer. There's no design support, and if a cabinet arrives damaged or wrong, you're looking at weeks of delays waiting for replacements. For most NB homeowners, the convenience and accountability of a local source outweighs the online price advantage.

Regardless of where you buy, **always get three quotes** from different sources. NB cabinet pricing varies significantly — 30-40% differences for comparable products are normal. Ask every supplier specifically about their warranty, whether it covers delamination and moisture damage (critical in our climate), and what happens if a piece arrives damaged or doesn't fit. If your contractor has a preferred cabinet supplier, ask why — experienced kitchen renovators often have relationships with suppliers whose quality and service they trust.

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What cabinet colour trends are popular in NB kitchens right now?

White and off-white cabinets remain the most popular choice in New Brunswick kitchens, but two-tone designs and warm wood tones are gaining strong momentum heading into 2026. Cabinet colour sets the entire mood of your kitchen, and NB homeowners are increasingly choosing finishes that balance timeless appeal with current style — smart thinking, since kitchens should last 15-20 years.

Classic white continues to dominate, especially in the "Simply White" and "Chantilly Lace" shades that Benjamin Moore popularized. White cabinets brighten NB kitchens during our long, dark Maritime winters and make smaller spaces feel larger — particularly important in older NB homes where kitchens were designed much smaller than today's standards. The key is choosing the right paint finish: a satin or semi-gloss on MDF-core doors gives you durability and easy cleaning while avoiding the yellowing that oil-based paints develop over time. MDF-core with a painted finish is actually the best mid-range choice for NB's climate, handling our humidity swings better than thermofoil, which can delaminate in our dry winter air.

Two-tone kitchens are the biggest growing trend in Moncton, Fredericton, and Saint John showrooms. The most popular combination is white uppers with a darker lower cabinet — navy blue, forest green, or charcoal grey. This adds visual depth without the commitment of going fully dark. A navy island with white perimeter cabinets is one of the most requested designs at NB kitchen studios right now. Budget roughly \$2,000-\$4,000 more for a two-tone layout versus single colour, since it requires additional paint matching and finishing time.

Warm wood tones are making a serious comeback after years of painted cabinet dominance. Natural oak, walnut, and white oak with clear or light stain are appearing in higher-end NB renovations, especially in modern farmhouse and Scandinavian-inspired designs. Solid wood doors handle NB's humidity swings better than thermofoil or rigid laminate, making this trend both stylish and practical. If you love the look of wood but want to save, consider wood-look lower cabinets with painted uppers.

Sage green and warm grey are the trending accent colours for 2025-2026 in the NB market. Sage green pairs particularly well with brass or gold hardware and butcher block accents. Warm greys ("Revere Pewter" and "Edgecomb Gray" tones) offer a softer alternative to the cool greys that dominated a few years ago and are already starting to feel dated.

A word of caution on very dark cabinets: all-black or espresso kitchens look stunning in showrooms and magazine photos, but in NB's reality of grey winter skies and limited natural light, they can make a kitchen feel cave-like. If you want dark cabinets, pair them with strong under-cabinet lighting, light countertops, and a bright backsplash to keep the space inviting. Semi-custom cabinets in trending colours run \$10,000-\$18,000 with a 4-8 week lead time, while custom options start at \$18,000 and take 8-16 weeks. Getting quotes from multiple contractors is essential —

NB pricing varies 30-40% for identical scope.

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How do I choose between frameless and face-frame cabinets for my NB kitchen?

Frameless (European-style) cabinets offer a sleek, modern look with slightly more interior storage space, while face-frame (traditional) cabinets provide a classic appearance and more structural rigidity — both work well in NB kitchens, but the choice depends on your style preferences, budget, and how the cabinets will handle our climate conditions.

Face-frame cabinets have a solid wood frame (typically 1.5 inches wide) attached to the front of the cabinet box. Doors and drawers mount to this frame, either as inset (flush with the frame) or overlay (covering part of the frame). This is the traditional North American construction style and remains the most common in New Brunswick homes. The face frame adds structural strength, which means the cabinet box itself can use slightly thinner materials. The downside is that the frame reduces the opening size, so you lose about 1.5 inches of accessible width per cabinet — noticeable when trying to fit large pots or baking sheets through the opening.

Frameless cabinets have no front frame — the doors mount directly to the box using concealed European hinges, and they cover the entire front of the cabinet (full overlay). This gives you the maximum interior access and a clean, seamless look with minimal gaps between doors. The cabinet box must be built from thicker material (typically 3/4-inch particleboard or plywood) to compensate for the lack of a face frame. Frameless is standard in European kitchens and is gaining popularity in NB, especially in newer construction and contemporary renovations in cities like Moncton and Fredericton.

Climate Considerations for NB

New Brunswick's dry winter heating and humid Maritime summers create a climate that affects cabinet construction. Face-frame cabinets have a slight advantage here: the solid wood frame flexes with humidity changes, and any

minor warping in the box is hidden behind the frame. With frameless cabinets, precision is everything — if the box warps or racks even slightly, the doors show it immediately through uneven gaps and misalignment.

For this reason, if you're choosing frameless cabinets for an NB kitchen, invest in **plywood box construction** rather than particleboard. Plywood holds up far better through seasonal humidity cycles. This is especially important for cabinets on exterior walls, where temperature variation causes more expansion and contraction. Quality frameless cabinets with plywood construction cost more — expect to pay \$12,000-\$20,000 for semi-custom frameless versus \$10,000-\$18,000 for face-frame in the same quality tier.

For door material in either style, **MDF-core painted doors** are the best mid-range choice in NB. They resist the warping and cracking that solid wood experiences during dry winter months, and they won't delaminate like thermofoil doors tend to within 5-10 years in our climate. If you prefer a natural wood look, solid maple or birch doors on face-frame cabinets handle NB conditions well, though expect some seasonal movement.

Practical Differences

Installation differs between the two styles. Face-frame cabinets are slightly more forgiving during installation because the frame can be scribed and shimmed to fit uneven walls — common in older NB homes where walls are rarely perfectly plumb or square. Frameless cabinets demand more precise installation and truly level mounting — any irregularity shows in the door alignment.

Hardware and accessories are more standardized for frameless cabinets. Pull-out shelves, drawer organizers, lazy Susans, and other interior accessories are designed primarily for frameless boxes and fit more easily. Face-frame cabinets often need adapter plates or specific hardware to accommodate the same accessories.

Both styles work beautifully in NB kitchens. If your home has a traditional character — think a 1970s Colonial or Cape Cod in Sussex or Oromocto — face-frame cabinets with a shaker-style door feel right at home. For a contemporary renovation in a Moncton condo or a modern Fredericton build, frameless cabinets deliver that clean, European aesthetic. Either way, prioritize quality construction materials suited to our Maritime climate over the frame style itself.

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What are the best pull-out cabinet organizers for deep NB kitchen cabinets?

Pull-out organizers are the single best upgrade for deep kitchen cabinets, transforming hard-to-reach dead space into fully accessible storage — and they're especially worthwhile in NB kitchens where older homes often have deep base cabinets with no modern organization. Budget \$75-\$400 per unit depending on style, plus \$50-\$150 for professional installation if you're not handy with a drill.

Pull-out wire or wood shelves are the most versatile starting point. These are flat sliding trays mounted on full-extension drawer slides that let you pull the entire shelf forward to see and reach everything. For standard 24-inch-deep base cabinets, look for shelves with full-extension slides (not partial-extension, which only come out 75% of the way). Chrome wire versions run \$75-\$150 per shelf, while solid wood or wood-composite shelves with higher sides run \$120-\$250. Install two per cabinet — one near the bottom and one midway up — to double your accessible storage.

Pull-out waste and recycling bins are a must-have in NB kitchens. New Brunswick's municipal recycling programs (which vary between Moncton, Saint John, Fredericton, and rural areas) mean most households sort waste into at least two or three streams. A double or triple pull-out bin system fits neatly inside a base cabinet, typically requiring a 15-inch or 18-inch wide opening. Expect \$100-\$300 for a quality unit from brands available at NB building suppliers. This keeps bins hidden and frees up floor space in smaller kitchens common in older NB homes.

Specialty Organizers Worth the Investment

Blind corner pull-outs (often called "magic corner" systems) solve the biggest storage problem in L-shaped and U-shaped NB kitchens. The standard lazy Susan works but wastes the deep interior corners. Magic corner systems use articulating shelves that slide out and swing forward, reclaiming 60-80% of that dead space. They cost \$250-\$500 installed but are transformative in compact kitchens where every inch counts.

Pull-out spice racks fit in the narrow 3-inch to 6-inch filler spaces beside your range or refrigerator. These slim vertical pull-outs hold dozens of spice bottles in a space that would otherwise be completely wasted. At \$100-\$200, they're an excellent use of space in small NB kitchens. Some kitchen cabinet manufacturers include these in semi-custom orders (\$10,000-\$18,000 range) at no extra charge.

Heavy-duty pot-and-pan pull-outs with high sides and reinforced slides handle the weight of cast iron and stainless steel cookware. Standard pull-out shelves are rated for 50-75 pounds, but pot-and-pan versions handle 100-150 pounds. These run \$150-\$350 and should go in the base cabinet nearest your range.

For **under-sink pull-outs**, choose organizers specifically designed for plumbing clearance — they have a U-shaped cutout at the back that fits around drain pipes and supply lines. This is especially useful in NB homes where older plumbing configurations can be irregular. Moisture-resistant materials are important here given NB's Maritime humidity — chrome wire or polymer trays resist the moisture that accumulates under kitchen sinks far better than bare wood.

Installation is straightforward for most pull-out organizers and falls within DIY territory if you're comfortable using a drill and level. The key is ensuring the slides are perfectly level and parallel — even a slight misalignment causes binding and premature wear. If your older NB cabinets have face frames, you may need adapter brackets to mount the slides properly. For corner units and specialty systems, professional installation (\$50-\$150 per unit) is worth the cost to ensure smooth operation.

Retrofitting pull-out organizers into existing cabinets is one of the highest-value kitchen upgrades you can make. For a typical NB kitchen with 8-12 base cabinets, outfitting the most-used cabinets with pull-outs runs \$500-\$2,000 in materials — far less than replacing cabinets entirely and a significant daily quality-of-life improvement.

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How do I properly measure for replacement kitchen cabinet doors in NB?

To measure for replacement cabinet doors, you need the exact height and width of each existing door measured to the nearest 1/16 inch, along with the hinge style, hinge boring pattern, and overlay dimension.

Getting these measurements right is critical — custom or semi-custom replacement doors take 4-8 weeks to arrive, and wrong measurements mean costly reorders and project delays.

Start by **removing one door** from its cabinet to make accurate measurements easier. Measure the door itself (not the opening) in three places: width at the top, middle, and bottom, then height on the left, middle, and right. If the measurements vary, use the largest dimension for each. Record every measurement to the nearest 1/16 inch. Even 1/8 inch off can mean doors that don't close properly or leave visible gaps.

Measure every door individually. This is where many NB homeowners make a costly mistake — assuming all doors of the same apparent size are identical. In older New Brunswick homes from the 1960s-1980s, cabinets were often site-built or from smaller manufacturers, and "matching" doors can vary by 1/4 inch or more. Even with factory-built cabinets, years of NB's humidity swings between dry winter heating and humid Maritime summers can cause subtle dimensional changes in wood and MDF doors. Number each door and its corresponding cabinet opening with painter's tape so you can track everything.

Understanding Overlay

Overlay is how much the door covers (overlaps) the cabinet face frame opening. This is the measurement most homeowners miss, and it's essential for ordering correct replacements. To find it, measure the cabinet opening width and height, then measure the door width and height. The difference between the door dimension and the opening dimension tells you the total overlay. Divide by two if the overlap is equal on both sides.

Common overlay types in NB kitchens: **Full overlay** means the door covers the entire face frame with minimal gaps between adjacent doors (typically 1/8-inch gaps). **Partial overlay** (also called standard or traditional) covers about 1/2 inch of the frame on each side, leaving the frame visible between doors. **Inset** doors sit flush inside the frame opening. Most older NB kitchens have partial overlay; many modern renovations use full overlay for a cleaner look.

Hinge Details

Record your **hinge type and boring pattern** before ordering. European concealed hinges (the most common type installed since the 1990s) require a 35mm cup boring in the door. Older NB kitchens may have surface-mount hinges, partial wrap hinges, or full inset hinges — each requires different door preparation. If you're switching hinge types (common when updating from visible to concealed hinges), you'll need new hinges and possibly different

boring, so factor that into your order.

Measure the **hinge placement** on your existing doors: distance from the top edge to the centre of the upper hinge, and from the bottom edge to the centre of the lower hinge. Replacement doors should match these positions unless you're re-boring new hinge holes.

Ordering and NB-Specific Tips

For drawer fronts, measure the same way — height, width, and overlay. Don't forget to note any **special shapes** like arched tops, cathedral profiles, or angled end panels.

When ordering replacement doors, you'll choose material and profile. **MDF-core with painted finish** is the best choice for NB kitchens — it handles our dry winter air without the cracking and warping that solid wood can experience, and it won't delaminate like thermofoil. Solid maple or birch are excellent but expect minor seasonal movement. Avoid rigid thermofoil for NB's climate.

Replacement cabinet doors for a typical NB kitchen (20-30 doors and drawer fronts) cost \$2,000-\$6,000 depending on material and style, with lead times of 4-8 weeks from most suppliers. Cabinet refacing — new doors plus matching veneer on the visible box surfaces — runs \$5,000-\$12,000 total and is a smart mid-budget option when your existing cabinet boxes are still structurally sound.

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