

VANCOUVER PAINT CONTRACTORS

Cabinet Painting & Refinishing

Kitchen and bathroom cabinet painting, refinishing,
and spray finishing for Metro Vancouver
homeowners looking for a cost-effective kitchen
update

15 Expert Answers from Paint IQ

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Q1

How much does it cost to get kitchen cabinets professionally painted in Vancouver?

Professional kitchen cabinet painting in Metro Vancouver typically ranges from \$3,500 to \$7,000 for an average-sized kitchen with 20 to 30 cabinet doors and drawer fronts. That price generally includes thorough cleaning, degreasing, sanding, priming, and two coats of high-quality acrylic or hybrid enamel paint. Larger kitchens with 40+ doors, or projects requiring significant repair work on damaged surfaces, can push costs up to \$9,000 or more. Spray finishing tends to sit at the higher end of that range because of the prep work involved in masking countertops, appliances, and flooring, but it delivers the smoothest factory-like finish. Brush-and-roller work is slightly less expensive but can leave subtle texture, which some homeowners actually prefer for a hand-crafted look. Keep in mind that Vancouver's higher labour costs compared to other parts of BC reflect the city's cost of living and the skill level of experienced cabinet painters working in the area. Many painters also offer add-ons like new hardware installation, soft-close hinge upgrades, or interior shelf painting, which add to the total. When comparing quotes, make sure each estimate covers the same scope of work, including the number of coats, type of primer, and whether cabinet boxes or just doors and drawers are included. A good next step is to request at least three in-home quotes from cabinet painters who can assess your kitchen's layout and current cabinet condition in person.

Q2

Is it better to spray or brush paint my kitchen cabinets?

Both methods can produce excellent results, but they suit different situations. Spray finishing delivers the smoothest, most uniform surface and is what most professional cabinet painters in Metro Vancouver prefer for achieving a factory-quality look. The fine mist from an HVLP or airless sprayer eliminates brush strokes entirely, and it covers raised-panel and detailed door profiles much more evenly than a brush or roller can. The trade-off is that spray work requires extensive masking and protection of surrounding surfaces, which adds to labour time and cost. In a Vancouver condo where space is tight and ventilation is limited, spraying on-site may require extra precautions or the painter may prefer to remove doors and spray them off-site in a controlled booth. Brush-and-roller application, on the other hand, works well in situations where masking the entire kitchen is impractical. A skilled painter using a high-density foam roller and a quality brush can achieve a very smooth finish, especially with modern self-levelling cabinet paints. The slight orange-peel texture from rolling is minimal with the right products and technique. For most homeowners, the deciding factor comes down to budget and expectations. If you want a flawless, furniture-grade finish and are willing to invest in it, spray is the way to go. If you are working with a tighter

budget and do not mind a subtle hand-painted character, brush and roller is a perfectly solid choice. Ask your painter to show you samples of both finishes before committing to one approach.

Q3

Can I paint over thermofoil cabinets or do they need to be replaced?

Thermofoil cabinets can absolutely be painted, and it is one of the most common cabinet refinishing requests in Metro Vancouver, especially in condos and townhomes built during the 1990s and 2000s when thermofoil was extremely popular. The key challenge is that thermofoil is a vinyl film heat-sealed over MDF, and paint does not naturally bond well to that slick surface without proper preparation. A professional cabinet painter will lightly scuff-sand the thermofoil, clean it thoroughly, and apply a high-adhesion bonding primer specifically designed for non-porous surfaces before painting. If the thermofoil is peeling, bubbling, or lifting at the edges, those sections need to be addressed first. Minor peeling can sometimes be re-glued and sanded smooth, but extensive delamination usually means those doors should be replaced with new MDF doors that can then be primed and painted. Painting over intact thermofoil is far more affordable than replacing all the doors and drawer fronts with new custom ones. In most cases, painting thermofoil cabinets costs roughly 40 to 60 percent less than full replacement. The painted finish holds up well as long as the right primer and topcoat are used. Look for painters who have specific experience with thermofoil, as the prep and product selection differ from painting solid wood or bare MDF. Your best next step is to have a cabinet painter inspect your thermofoil surfaces in person to determine how much of the vinyl is still in good condition.

Q4

My oak cabinets look really dated — should I paint them or just replace them entirely?

Painting oak cabinets is one of the most cost-effective kitchen upgrades you can do, and it is a particularly popular choice in Metro Vancouver where full kitchen renovations can easily run \$30,000 to \$60,000 or more. Oak itself is an extremely durable hardwood, and the cabinet boxes are often still in excellent structural condition even after 20 or 30 years. What makes them look dated is usually the honey-toned stain and the prominent grain pattern. Professional painting can completely transform that look. The process involves thorough cleaning and degreasing, sanding to create a mechanical bond, filling the open grain with a grain filler if you want a perfectly smooth modern finish, priming with a high-adhesion primer, and applying two coats of a durable cabinet-grade paint. Grain filling is optional but recommended if you prefer a sleek contemporary look rather than seeing the oak texture through the paint. Popular colour choices in Vancouver right now include warm whites, soft greys, deep navy, and sage green. Replacing oak cabinets with new custom or semi-custom cabinetry involves demolition, potential countertop and backsplash damage, plumbing disconnection, and significantly longer timelines. Painting keeps your kitchen fully functional with only a few days of disruption. The only scenario where replacement makes more sense is if the cabinet layout no longer works for your needs or the boxes are water-damaged or falling apart. Consider scheduling a consultation with a cabinet painter who can evaluate whether your oak cabinets are good candidates for refinishing.

Q5

What kind of paint should be used on kitchen cabinets to make sure it lasts?

Cabinet paint needs to be far more durable than standard wall paint because kitchen cabinets endure daily handling, moisture, grease, and temperature changes. The gold standard for professional cabinet painting in the Vancouver area is a hybrid alkyd enamel, which combines the smooth, hard finish of traditional oil-based paint with the easy cleanup and low odour of water-based products. Benjamin Moore Advance and Sherwin-Williams Emerald Urethane Trim Enamel are two of the most widely used products by professional cabinet painters in BC. Both self-level beautifully, cure to a hard shell, and resist yellowing over time. Some painters also use catalyzed lacquers or two-part polyurethane coatings for an even harder, more chemical-resistant finish, though these require spray application and proper ventilation. For bathroom cabinets, moisture resistance is especially important, so a product with strong humidity tolerance is essential. Sheen level matters too. Most cabinet painters recommend semi-gloss or satin for kitchen and bathroom cabinets because these sheens are easy to wipe clean and highlight the smooth finish. Matte finishes look beautiful but show fingerprints and are harder to clean. Equally important is the primer. A

high-adhesion bonding primer like Stix or BIN shellac-based primer ensures the topcoat grips the surface properly, especially on previously finished wood, thermofoil, or laminate. The best next step is to ask your painter which specific products they use and why, and request a sample so you can see and feel the cured finish before committing.

Q6

How long does it take to paint kitchen cabinets and will I be able to use my kitchen during the process?

A professional kitchen cabinet painting project in Metro Vancouver typically takes between four and seven working days depending on the size of the kitchen and the method used. If the painter removes the doors and drawer fronts to spray them off-site in a workshop, the process is less disruptive at home. Your cabinet boxes stay in place and are prepped and painted on-site, usually over one or two days. The doors are sprayed, left to cure, and then reinstalled once everything is dry. During this time you still have access to your cabinet openings, so you can use dishes, pots, and your countertops as normal. Cooking and using the sink is usually fine, though the painter may need to mask off areas near the boxes being painted. If the painter sprays everything on-site, you may need to avoid the kitchen for portions of each day while paint is being applied and drying. Proper curing is important to the longevity of the finish. Most hybrid enamel paints are dry to the touch within a few hours but take two to four weeks to fully cure to their hardest state. During that curing period, you should avoid placing heavy items on shelves, using harsh cleaners, or sticking anything to the surfaces. Vancouver's mild but humid climate can extend cure times slightly compared to drier regions, so your painter may recommend keeping good airflow in the kitchen during the first week. To plan effectively, ask your painter for a detailed timeline that includes prep days, painting days, and the reinstallation schedule.

Q7

How much would it cost to refinish bathroom vanity cabinets in a Vancouver condo?

Refinishing a bathroom vanity cabinet in a Metro Vancouver condo typically costs between \$800 and \$2,000, depending on the size of the vanity, the number of doors and drawers, and the current condition of the surface. A standard single-sink vanity with two doors and a few drawers sits at the lower end of that range, while a double-sink vanity or one with extensive prep work needed will be higher. The process is similar to kitchen cabinet painting — thorough cleaning, sanding, priming with a high-adhesion bonding primer, and applying two coats of a moisture-resistant cabinet enamel. Bathrooms present a few unique challenges. Humidity levels are higher, so the paint and primer need to be formulated for wet environments. Ventilation in condo bathrooms is often limited to a small exhaust fan, which means drying and curing times may be longer. Some painters prefer to remove vanity doors and paint them off-site to avoid spraying in a confined space. If your vanity is made of particleboard or MDF with a laminate or thermofoil finish, it can still be painted as long as the material is not swollen from water damage. Swollen or delaminating areas should be repaired or the affected doors replaced before painting. Compared to installing a new vanity, which can run \$1,500 to \$4,000 or more including plumbing disconnection and reconnection, refinishing is a smart budget-friendly alternative. Reach out to a cabinet refinishing professional to get an in-person assessment of your vanity's condition and a firm quote.

Q8

Do I need to empty my kitchen cabinets before they get painted?

Yes, you will need to empty your cabinets before the painting process begins, and it is one of the most important prep steps homeowners can handle themselves to keep the project on schedule and reduce costs. Everything inside the cabinets should be removed, including dishes, food, cleaning supplies, and shelf liners. This protects your belongings from dust, paint fumes, and accidental drips. It also gives the painter full access to the cabinet interiors if those are being painted or primed as well. In Metro Vancouver condos and smaller homes where storage space is limited, a good strategy is to pack everything into labelled bins and stack them in another room, a storage locker, or even in a hallway closet temporarily. Most professional cabinet painters will let you know exactly when to have everything cleared out, usually the day before work begins. Some homeowners choose to have only the doors and drawer fronts painted and leave the interior cabinet boxes as-is. In that case, you still need to remove contents from the boxes so the painter can access the face frames and work around the openings without risk of contaminating your belongings. If your cabinets have built-in organizers, lazy Susans, or pull-out shelves, those should be removed as well. The emptying process usually takes a couple of hours for an average kitchen. Plan to

have your items packed up at least a day ahead of the painter's start date so no time is wasted on the first morning.

Q9

We have a 1980s kitchen in Burnaby with dark stained cabinets — can they be painted white without looking cheap?

Absolutely, and this is one of the most popular transformations cabinet painters in the Metro Vancouver area handle regularly. Burnaby has a large stock of 1980s and early 1990s homes with dark walnut or mahogany-stained cabinets that are structurally solid but visually heavy by today's standards. Painting them white or off-white can completely modernize the kitchen without the cost and disruption of a full renovation. The key to avoiding a cheap-looking result is proper preparation and product selection. Dark stained cabinets require a stain-blocking primer, typically a shellac-based product like Zinsser BIN, to prevent the dark tannins from bleeding through the white topcoat. Without this step, you can end up with yellowish or brownish discolouration showing through the white paint over time. After priming, two full coats of a high-quality cabinet enamel in a semi-gloss or satin finish will give you a rich, opaque, professional-looking surface. If the cabinets have heavy raised-panel profiles or routed details, spray application produces the best results because it gets into all the grooves and edges evenly. Another factor that elevates the look is updating the hardware at the same time. Swapping old brass or oak pulls for modern brushed nickel, matte black, or brass bar handles makes the painted cabinets look intentionally designed rather than simply covered up. Pair the freshly painted cabinets with updated lighting or a new backsplash and the kitchen can feel like an entirely different space. Start by inviting a cabinet painter to your Burnaby home to assess the wood type and condition so they can give you an accurate scope of work.

Q10

What prep work goes into painting cabinets properly and can I do any of it myself to save money?

Proper prep is the single most important factor in a cabinet paint job that looks great and lasts for years. Professional cabinet painters in Metro Vancouver follow a multi-step process that typically includes removing all doors, drawer fronts, and hardware, then labelling everything so it goes back in the right place. The surfaces are cleaned with a strong degreaser like TSP to remove years of cooking grease, fingerprint oils, and grime that build up on kitchen cabinets. After cleaning, the surfaces are sanded to create a profile for the primer to grip. On previously stained or varnished cabinets, this usually means 150 to 220 grit sanding. Any dents, scratches, or holes from old hardware are filled with wood filler and sanded smooth. Then a high-adhesion primer is applied before the topcoat goes on. As for doing some of this yourself, the most practical thing homeowners can handle is removing hardware, emptying cabinets, and labelling doors. Some homeowners also take on the degreasing step, which saves the painter an hour or two. However, sanding, filling, and especially priming are best left to the professionals because mistakes at those stages directly affect how well the paint adheres and how long the finish lasts. Incorrect sanding can leave scratches that show through the paint, and using the wrong primer can lead to peeling within months. If you want to save on labour costs, discuss with your painter which specific tasks you can take on without compromising the quality of the finished result.

Q11

Can I paint my bathroom vanity myself, or should I hire someone? It's an older oak one that looks really dated?

Refinishing an older oak bathroom vanity is one of the most impactful upgrades you can make for relatively little cost, and it's a project that falls right in the middle of the DIY-versus-hire spectrum.

If you're handy and patient, you can tackle it yourself. The key is committing to proper prep — oak's open grain needs to be filled before painting, or you'll see the wood texture through the finish. Use a grain filler, let it cure, then sand smooth with 150-grit followed by 220-grit. Apply a bonding primer (not regular primer), then two coats of a cabinet-grade paint like a hybrid alkyd-acrylic. The whole project takes three to four days with drying time.

The DIY risk is in the bathroom environment. Vancouver's humidity, especially in homes without adequate bathroom ventilation, can cause adhesion failures if the paint doesn't cure properly. You need at least 48 hours of low humidity after the final coat, which can be tricky in our climate outside of summer.

Hiring a professional painter for a single vanity refinish typically costs \$400 to \$750 in Metro Vancouver, depending on the vanity size and whether you want the interior painted as well. That includes removal of doors and drawers, proper spray application in a controlled environment, and reinstallation. The spray finish is noticeably smoother than what you can achieve with a brush.

Most homeowners find the professional route worthwhile for bathroom vanities specifically because the finish quality matters so much in a small space where you see it up close daily. As a next step, remove a drawer and bring it to a paint store to discuss colour options and get a feel for the wood's condition before committing to either approach.

Q12

We want to paint our laminate kitchen cabinets — is this even possible or will it just peel off?

Painting laminate cabinets is absolutely possible and it's become one of the most popular kitchen updates in Metro Vancouver, but the process is different from painting wood cabinets and the prep is non-negotiable.

Laminate is a smooth, non-porous surface that regular paint won't grip. The secret is using a bonding primer specifically designed for slick surfaces — products labelled for laminate, melamine, or glossy surfaces. Skip this step and yes, the paint will peel off within months.

Here's the proper process: First, clean every surface thoroughly with a degreaser to remove years of cooking residue. Then lightly scuff the laminate with 220-grit sandpaper — you're not trying to remove the laminate, just creating microscopic scratches for the primer to grab. Wipe away all dust with a tack cloth.

Apply one coat of bonding primer and let it cure fully (usually 24 hours, not just dry to touch). Then apply two thin coats of a high-quality cabinet paint. Hybrid alkyd or urethane-modified acrylic paints give the hardest, most durable finish on laminate. Avoid pure latex — it stays too soft for the daily wear cabinets endure.

The biggest factor in longevity is cure time. Keep the cabinets in light use for the first two weeks after painting. In Vancouver's cooler months, this cure period extends even longer since lower temperatures slow the chemical hardening process.

One honest caveat: painted laminate won't be quite as durable as painted solid wood. Expect to do minor touch-ups every few years, particularly around high-use handles. As a next step, test the full process on a single cabinet door or the inside of a less-visible door before committing to the whole kitchen.

Q13

What kind of prep and hardware changes should I plan for when getting my cabinets professionally painted?

Proper preparation is what separates a cabinet paint job that lasts a decade from one that chips within a year. Here's what to expect and plan for when hiring a professional in Metro Vancouver.

A quality cabinet painter will remove all doors, drawers, and hardware before painting. They should label everything systematically so reassembly goes smoothly. Expect them to fill any existing hardware holes if you're changing handle placement, sand all surfaces, clean with a degreaser, and apply bonding primer before the finish coats.

Regarding hardware, this is the ideal time to upgrade. New handles and knobs can completely transform the look, and since the painter is already filling and prepping, changing hole spacing costs very little extra. Bar pulls in brushed brass or matte black are the most requested styles in Vancouver right now. Budget \$8 to \$25 per pull and \$5 to \$12 per knob, depending on quality.

If you're switching from knobs to pulls (or vice versa), you'll need new holes drilled. A good painter includes this in their scope. If you're keeping the same hardware, have them paint around the mounting points carefully — removing hardware and repainting behind it prevents the chipped paint rings that develop when hardware is left on during painting.

Ask your painter about soft-close hinge upgrades while the doors are off. Adding soft-close mechanisms costs roughly \$3 to \$7 per hinge and dramatically reduces the slamming that chips fresh paint over time.

Plan to be without full use of your kitchen for three to five business days during a professional cabinet paint project. As a next step, visit a hardware showroom to choose your new pulls and knobs before the painter starts, so everything can be installed the same day the doors go back on.

Q14

How long does a professional cabinet painting project actually take, and how much will it disrupt our kitchen?

This is one of the first questions Vancouver homeowners ask, and it's smart to plan for it realistically. A professional cabinet painting project for an average-sized Metro Vancouver kitchen (roughly 20 to 30 doors and drawer fronts) typically takes five to seven business days from start to finish.

Here's the typical timeline: Day one involves removing all doors, drawers, and hardware, plus taping and masking the kitchen. Days two and three are spent on cleaning, sanding, priming, and filling in the shop or on-site spray area. Days three through five are for applying finish coats with proper drying time between them. Days six and seven cover reinstallation of doors, drawers, hardware, and final touch-ups.

During this time, your kitchen is partially usable. The cabinet boxes (the frames attached to the wall) are usually painted in place over one to two days, and your countertops, sink, and appliances remain accessible throughout. You'll lose easy access to the contents behind the doors for about a week, so pull out essentials beforehand — dishes, pots, coffee maker, and anything you use daily.

The total cost for a professional cabinet painting project in Metro Vancouver ranges from \$3,500 to \$7,000 depending on kitchen size, paint quality, and whether you're changing the colour dramatically (going from dark to light requires more coats). This is roughly one-fifth the cost of new cabinets, which makes it one of the best-value kitchen upgrades available.

Most painters won't spray inside your home due to overspray concerns, so doors and drawers are typically taken off-site or sprayed in your garage. As a next step, clear a section of your dining or living room to store kitchen items during the project, and plan simple meals that don't require much cabinet access for the week.

Q15

What cabinet colours are trending right now in Vancouver kitchens?

Vancouver kitchen colour trends have shifted noticeably over the past couple of years, moving away from the stark white that dominated for so long. Here's what we're seeing across Metro Vancouver homes right now.

Warm whites and off-whites have largely replaced pure bright white. Colours like Benjamin Moore's Simply White or Sherwin-Williams Alabaster add warmth without feeling dated. They work beautifully with the natural light that many Vancouver homes get, especially in south-facing kitchens.

Sage green and muted olive tones are extremely popular, reflecting the West Coast connection to nature. These pair perfectly with the wood accents and natural stone that are trending in Vancouver kitchen design. They also complement the mountain and garden views that many homes enjoy.

Deep navy and charcoal are holding strong for lower cabinets in two-tone kitchens — light uppers with dramatic lowers. This approach works particularly well in the open-plan layouts common in newer Vancouver condos and townhomes in areas like Mount Pleasant, Burnaby, and the Tri-Cities.

Greige (grey-beige blends) continues to be a safe, sophisticated choice that appeals to homeowners planning to sell. It photographs well for listings and appeals to a broad range of buyers in Vancouver's competitive real estate market.

One trend gaining momentum is leaving upper cabinets in a lighter colour while painting the island a bold accent — deep teal, forest green, or even black. This creates a furniture-like focal point without overwhelming the space.

A word of caution: very trendy colours can date quickly. If you're painting cabinets for long-term enjoyment, lean toward classic tones with subtle warmth rather than chasing the latest Instagram trend. As a next step, collect photos of Vancouver kitchens you love and bring them to your colour consultation — seeing the colours in context is far more useful than staring at paint chips.

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