



# PRIVATE AIR

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## LUXURY HOMES

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*Marilyn Hoffman presents*  
**FREELAND FARMS**  
Manifesto of An American Castle

# CLEAN DESIGN

*Founder and CEO of Robin Wilson Home and the author of the book **Clean Design: Wellness for Your Lifestyle**, Robin Wilson shares **dos and don'ts** when it comes to kitchen renovations.*

By: Tricia Drevers

**D**on't design your kitchen with someone else's life in mind is near the top of her list of don'ts. "If you have a family and you like to cook, don't get white marble countertops," she offers as an example. "Get a countertop that cleans easily -- such as a composite -- so if your child spills ketchup on it, you won't have a stain."

On the other hand, if you seldom cook, Wilson says you probably don't need a restaurant-quality range and a six-burner stove.

Wilson also advises against buying most "professional" series appliances, explaining that most mainstream major appliances perform just as well. She also recommends that you not select a range by BTU numbers alone. "An extreme BTU number does not guarantee better performance," she says.

"The reality is that most people do not need four high BTU burners," she says. "You can be just as happy with a range that has one high BTU burner that you can use if you need to heat something quickly."

Wilson also recommends that you steer way from purchasing built-in refrigerators. "Most people buy built-ins because they are taller," Wilson says, "but they are usually narrower depth wise and your cubic feet shrink." In addition, built-ins can add \$1,000 to \$2,000 to the cost of a refrigerator, she points out.

As another don't, Wilson stresses that extended warranties on major appliances are usually a waste of money. "Most appliances, especially energy star-rated appliances, are geared for a lifetime of eight to 10 years," she says. "Extended warranties are just a profit center for most dealers."





At the top of Wilson's kitchen renovation "do" list is to do some homework planning before scheduling a kitchen design meeting. She says that you may be seduced into buying items you don't really need or want or into choosing colors or styles that don't fit your tastes if you don't have some firm ideas of what you like beforehand.

She recommends having a list of "absolutes" for the meeting that includes your choices in:

- countertops
- island or galley style preference
- required appliances
- number of plugs and desired plug placement
- colors and styles

"Tear out photos of colors in advance," she says. "Color choices are all preference, but neutrals are good." She adds that popular current kitchen colors are a buttermilk shade and warm whites. She also sees a trend in cabinets in a slate grey blue color.

When choosing a contractor for your kitchen renovation, Wilson says that the highest price company may not necessarily be the best. "I recommend going to someone's house falling in love with their kitchen and asking who designed it," she says.

She urges homeowners to purchase cabinets that are painted and finished with your custom color choice in the factory. Cabinets that are painted onsite in your home tend to experience cracks, fissures, and other signs of wear from the variable temperatures in the kitchen environment, she warns.

As someone who specializes in designing living spaces that are hypoallergenic, Wilson has a list of cleaning and maintenance tips for keeping your kitchen free from allergens and toxic substances. She recommends that homeowners pass this list on to their housekeeping staff:

1. "The lip of a top-mount sink is a harbinger of bacteria," says Wilson. It needs regular inspection and cleaning.
2. The icemaker and water system of a refrigerator requires regular filter cleaning and replacement.
3. If your refrigerator has a water drip tray, be sure to empty and clean it regularly.
4. To keep mold out of the dishwasher, run a half-cup to a cup full of white vinegar through its cycle once a month.
5. Clean and de-grease range hoods and exhaust filters. The build-up of grease in this area can be a fire hazard.
6. Kitchen dirt and grease can also build up on window treatments, so be sure to clean them on a regular basis.
7. Finally, Wilson warns that by using many different cleaning products in our kitchen, we are creating a "chemical stew."

"Ask your housekeeping staff to be aware of what cleaners they are using and how they interact with each other," she suggests. →

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