

## More Than a Mere Bowl

By [Mary Ellen Slayter](#)

You need a kitchen sink whether you're building a new house or renovating an old one. Finding the right one is a balance of budget, function and looks.

A low-end model gives you a basic bowl in which to soak a few dirty dishes but not much else. A higher price tag buys you a range of choices -- some functional, some purely aesthetic.

For such a simple kitchen feature, the options are seemingly endless. Start with how many bowls you want -- a sink can come with one, two or even three. Is the standard depth just fine? Or do you want an extra-deep sink for scrubbing soup pots?

Do you want an "overmount" or self-rimming sink that drops in on top of your countertop? Or an undermount sink that hides supporting hardware and allows you to sweep water and debris straight from the countertop down the drain?

The range of materials has grown. Do you appreciate the utilitarian sturdiness of stainless steel? Or covet the warm look of fireclay, a stain-resistant ceramic? Or would you prefer an old-fashioned farmhouse sink of cast iron to carry out a rustic theme?

Some manufacturers have even developed sinks that do double duty as cooktops, such as Kohler's Pro CookSink.

Stainless steel undermount sinks are popular, said Vicki Paul, an interior designer at the Kitchen Guild in Fairfax. If you're going with that standby, the gauge of the metal is the best indication of quality, with 18 gauge or lower preferred. Twenty-gauge stainless steel is the cheapest, but it isn't very durable and "it's going to sound really hollow," she said. Commercial kitchen sinks are often made with 12-gauge stainless, but that is overkill in most home kitchens.

Paul said her clients usually spend \$400 to \$600 on their sinks, as part of a \$75,000 to \$80,000 kitchen renovation. Elkay, Kohler and Blanco are common brands she turns to.

