

# The New York Times

## Renovating Your Kitchen This Summer? Proceed With Caution.

Supply chain problems and labor shortages have made home improvement projects even more complicated.



The salesman for the cabinets I was about to order stood in my kitchen a few weeks ago, looking worried. Normally, he would wait until after a contractor had gutted my kitchen to take final measurements, because these semi-custom cabinets ordinarily take three or four weeks to arrive. Now, because of pandemic-related delays, they would take 13 weeks, maybe more.

A major kitchen renovation is never easy. It's like assembling a three-dimensional jigsaw puzzle, with the addition of each piece dependent on the one before it. Renovating a kitchen during a pandemic is even trickier. The global supply chain has been upended at nearly every point, leading to [delays in everything](#) from refrigerators to lumber.

Before we called our contractor back, we considered waiting another year to avoid the pandemic frenzy. But another year would only create more problems. We could end up spending money on more stopgap fixes as the kitchen continues to deteriorate. Plus, the uncertainty isn't going to end anytime soon.

Since I am no fan of surprises, I called up [Liz Caan](#), an interior designer in Newton, Mass., who renovated her own kitchen last year, to find out how her job went. She started the project in June, and because she had ordered her materials before the pandemic, she thought she would be ahead of the curve. When she ran into problems, she pivoted, ordering, for example, the floor model of a Sub-Zero refrigerator when she learned a new one wouldn't arrive for months.

But then came the Carrara marble countertop. The material arrived from Atlanta without a hitch, but the fabricator outside of Boston was backed up with orders that had been delayed during the shutdown, so Ms. Caan found herself at the back of the line. For six weeks, her kitchen sat there, nearly complete, but not functional because without a countertop she couldn't install a faucet.

"It looked like a kitchen but it wasn't a kitchen — I couldn't use it," she said. She finally completed the renovation in October, about four months after she started.

I asked her how to avoid, or at least reduce, the chances of getting caught in the supply chain trap. She suggested gathering as much information from the supplier as possible before placing an order.

"It's a booming market coming out of a shutdown," Ms. Caan said. "Everyone wants everything, but there is still a lot of product out there. You have to be patient."