

Deciding on What You Want When You Buy Cabinet Doors Online

In our last article we discussed the costs that go into producing and purchasing cabinet doors that you would buy online (or anywhere else). To recap, we found that the cost to you can range all over the place and that paying the most doesn't necessarily mean that you're getting the most. Sales mark-up, cost of shipping, economies of scale and other factors all play a significant role in cost without having any impact on the quality.

In this article we'll layout some of the style decisions you have to weigh before you even consider which vendor to use.

The first place to start is to decide what it is you really want – or, at least, what you think you want. Before all is said and done, you may find that you can't afford exactly what you really want, but by starting there you can work your way to similar options that may be less expensive. You may go into this process with a few different options, and that's ok.

(Of course, if you're trying to match existing doors, then 'what you want' is going to be identical to 'what you need'. The biggest style decision in this case would be to choose whether to order them unfinished or try to match your existing finish.)

If you don't yet know what you want, this is the time to browse around anywhere you can: look online and in stores and look at friends' kitchens or magazine photos. Read up on the various wood species – some have more grain (like oak) or more of a red tone (like cherry) and some may have color limitations (such as maple not working well with dark stains). Consider whether you want arched cabinet doors (which will rule out mitered door styles) or if you want glass doors with or without mullions. (Mullions are dividers which turn the glass into multiple "lites", like panes on a traditional window.) Think about whether you have very large doors or very small doors which could make a particular style unwieldy, or if you have lazy-susan or bi-fold doors that have specialty hinge considerations. And, while it may be hard to decide on a color without samples, give some thought as to whether you want a dark or light finish (which may depend on the size of the room) and whether you might want to add a glaze to highlight the beads and grooves of a decorative door.

There's one very important factor that should play a role in your decision that some people don't consider until too late: What is the climate in the particular room where the [cabinet doors](#) are going? Most people live in a reasonably well controlled environment these days with air conditioning and heating to keep the temperature and humidity within a reasonable range. However, if these cabinet doors are going in a beach house, for example, which will be closed for part of the year or placed in a room next to a wood-burning stove that dries the air excessively, then you have to factor that in. Cope-and-stick (also known as mortise-and-tenon) joints are better suited to changing conditions than mitered joints. MDF or plywood panels are less likely to expand and contract than wood panels (though well-made 5-piece doors are designed to handle a certain amount of expansion and contraction). Stained finishes, if done properly, are less likely to highlight expansion seams than painted finishes.

Ultimately, take your time, do some research and think this through. You are likely to be living with these cabinet doors for a long time and they will be a not insignificant investment. The more you know upfront, the better you'll be able to choose the right doors – and the right provider.

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