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REAL ESTATE | DESIGN

## Should Rugs Stay Out of the Kitchen? Designers Duke it Out

Some interior designers think the kitchen is no place for a crumb-catching carpet. Others believe they can work around the ick factor.



RUG RATIONALE Architect Mark Maresca spread out a traditional vintage rug beneath a contemporary pendant light from Urban Electric to add an element of old-new contrast to his Charleston, S.C., kitchen. PHOTO: ANNE CHANDLER/THE URBAN ELECTRIC CO.

By *Elana Frankel*

21 COMMENTS

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### Yes

**FROM A PRACTICAL** standpoint, many people greet the notion of a rug in the kitchen with a visceral response: Ick. “I can’t imagine anything less appetizing than something that absorbs smells, soaks up spills and holds footprints on the floor of an environment that is meant to be clean, beautiful and functional,” said bicoastal designer Tim Campbell. Some also question the wisdom of introducing a potential skateboard—a textile apt to slip across a slick floor—into the room. Rug-averse Toronto designer Anne Hepfer finds other, safer ways to add a layer of design, texture and color. “I love using tiles and custom vinyl runners in kitchens,” she said. Her favorite source of the latter, Bolon, creates a sustainable version by converting vinyl waste, she said. Minimalists such as Mr. Campbell villainize rugs in the kitchen as clutter, while Houston designer Margaret Naeve, a fan of natural stone and herringbone-wood floors, sees them as interlopers that interfere with the room’s aesthetic: “The kitchen is a place to mix finishes into the overall design,” she said. “Why cover it up with a rug?”

## No

“A PATTERNED RUG adds a warmth and patina that take the edge off a kitchen’s hard surfaces,” said architect Mark Maresca, who says well-worn vintage examples do this job splendidly. Los Angeles designer Wendy Haworth points to a more-easily maintained option. “I’ve done a washable cotton runner from Nickey Kehoe that was well priced, so my client got two to rotate with cleaning,” she said. As for the banana-peel factor, she added: “A pad is good to prevent slipping or tripping, and something with a little cushion helps when you’re working in the kitchen for a while.” New York architect David Ling noted that rugs can make for an acoustically abusive kitchen (think stone floors under a high ceiling) easier on the ears but stressed that size and proportion matter. “A proper balance must be struck between the main kitchen-floor material and the area rugs so that the composition reads intentional rather than spotty, utilitarian or ill-fitting,” he said. That’s why Jeffrey Weisman avoids “kitchen carpets that look like bathroom rugs one throws in the washing machine.” The co-founder of Fisher Weisman, based in San Francisco and San Miguel de Allende, Mexico, conceded that clients usually want a rug in the kitchen: “They are divided between those who want something practical and those who crave something gorgeous.” His design team avoids pile carpets that harbor crumbs. “Instead, we find machine-made Oriental carpets from the first half of the 20th century,” he said. “They aren’t terribly expensive, camouflage the inevitable drips and spills, vacuum and clean easily and look gorgeous. Problem solved.”