

# Molding Tips for Kitchen Cabinets

by Annette DePaepe

**W**ithout spending a lot of money, you can use wood moldings to transform a plain kitchen into one that attracts attention. If they're proportioned correctly, moldings can make cabinetry an integral part of the home's interior design, or create the look of fine furniture. Here are some tips for using moldings in several areas of the kitchen.

## Cabinet Tops

Placing moldings above wall and tall cabinets serves two purposes: It will camouflage an out-of-level ceiling and de-emphasize joints between cabinets. And it will unify the individual cabinets by drawing the eye to the horizontal line of the molding (see Figure 1). With the right molding, the homeowner's

perception will shift from one of "boxes on a wall" to that of a cohesive kitchen design. This goes for any type of installation, whether the space above the molding is left open for display, is closed in by a soffit, or is continued up to the ceiling. Crown moldings can also be incorporated in a lighting soffit above the cabinets.

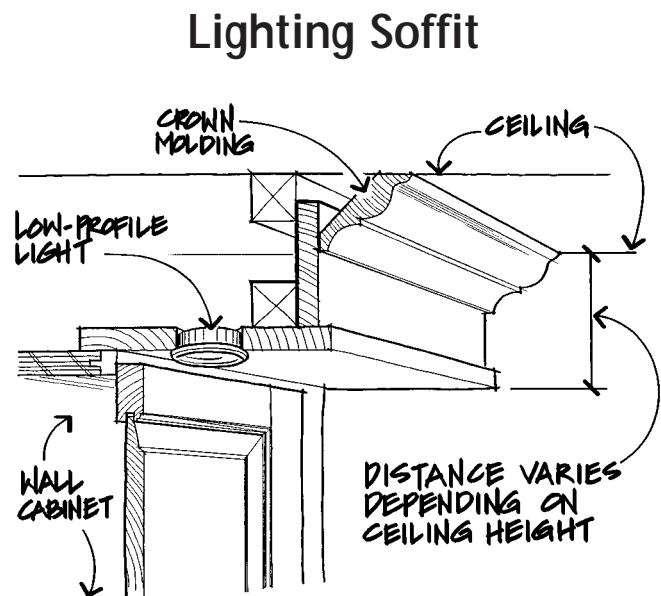
Keep in mind the cabinet door style and molding proportions relative to the overall space when recommending a molding treatment. In general, more complex door styles require a more intricate (and costly) molding treatment.

## Backsplash Area

The backsplash area may include light valances, hutch ends, and countertop edge moldings. The most important of

these is the light valance, which is installed under wall cabinets and is typically used to hide undercabinet lighting (Figure 2, next page). But I recommend this molding whether it's required to hide lighting fixtures or not because, like the molding above wall cabinets, it attracts the eye and make the cabinets feel more like furniture.

Typically, the light valance molding should be smaller than the molding on top of the wall cabinets, and should not exceed 2½ inches in height. The key is to make the light valance look like part of the cabinet's construction, rather than an afterthought. An easy way to accomplish this is by extending the wall cabinet end panels approximately ⅛ inch beyond the bottom valance molding.



**Figure 1.** Extending a cabinet-top crown molding onto the adjacent walls integrates the cabinets into the overall design of the room (left). A crown molding can also be incorporated into a lighting soffit (above).

## At the Floor

A trend in recent years has been to make built-in cabinetry feel as much like freestanding furniture as possible. This can be accomplished by eliminating the traditional toe kick and instead using baseboard, bracket feet, legs, or turned posts. A natural place to use this technique is on islands, peninsulas, and hutches (Figure 3).

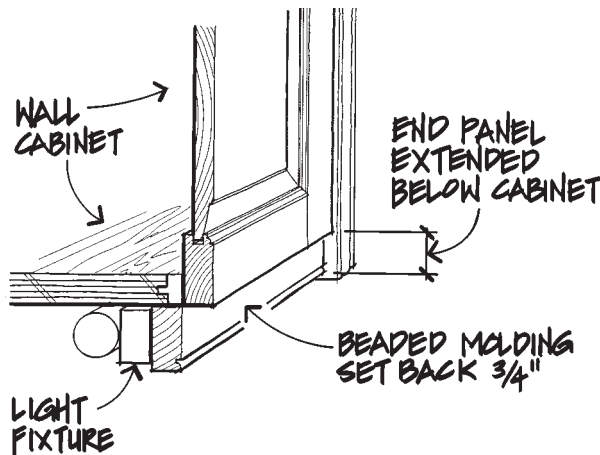
## Tying Cabinets Together

In fact, a hutch is a good place to pull out all the stops. The hutch in Figure 3 uses an arched cornice with crown molding, end brackets on the upper cabinets, and pilasters and bracket feet below to create the look of freestanding furniture. To minimize concerns about job-site installation, many custom cabinets manufacturers will ship such cabinets with moldings already mitered and attached.



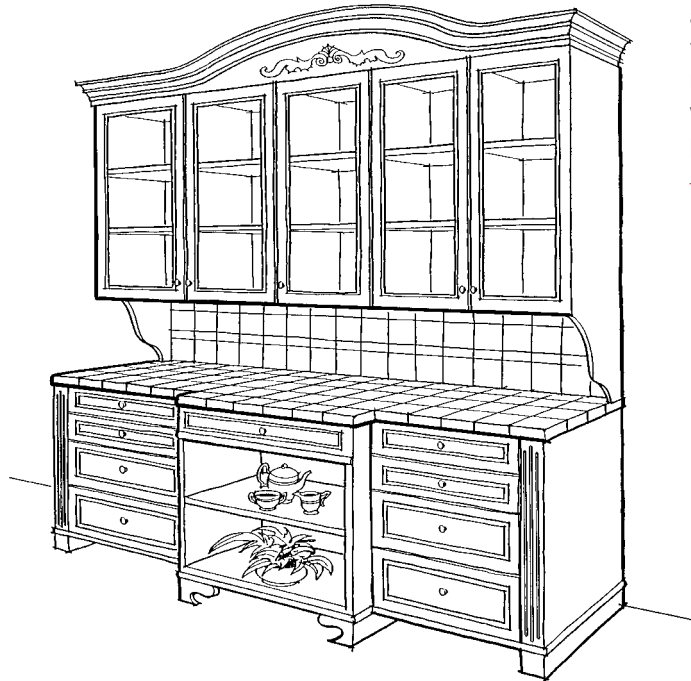
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## Lighting Valance



**Figure 2.** You can create a simple light valance by extending the end panels below the bottom of the cabinets and running a beaded molding between.

## Furniture Look



**Figure 3.** Though it is composed of individual cabinets, the bracket feet and pilasters as well as the arched cornice above make this tile-countertopped wall hutch feel like a piece of furniture.