

Chatterbox #196 – Kitchen renovation

Episode description

Do you dream about renovating your kitchen? In this Chatterbox episode, Andrew and Suzanne discuss Suzanne's changes to her kitchen. Join them as they have a natural and fun conversation all about renovations!

Fun fact

Over the past decades, kitchens have changed. In the 1930s, kitchen countertops were custom-built based on the height of the woman of the house! Now, in Canada, the standard height of the average kitchen countertop is 36 inches.

Expressions included in the learning materials

- A veggie
- A mock-up
- To crack open
- To be blown away
- To be eco-friendly





Transcript

Note: The words and expressions that appear in **bold text** within the transcript are discussed in more detail in the Detailed Explanations section that follows the transcript.

Andrew: Hey, everybody. My name is Andrew.

Suzanne: And I'm Suzanne.

Andrew: And we are back with another Culips episode. Hey, Suzanne.

Suzanne: Hey, Andrew, how are you?

Andrew: I'm doing great, how are you?

Suzanne: Pretty busy these days.

Andrew: You're pretty busy? You must have your hands full.

Suzanne: I do have my hands full, quite a lot on my plate, actually. We're doing a kitchen renovation.

Andrew: Yeah, I remember you told me this a couple of weeks ago, that you're renovating your kitchen right now. What does this mean, renovate?

Suzanne: Well, that's a good question. It means to remake, so there's a taking down and a building back up of the kitchen.

Andrew: Oh, you're kind of upgrading the kitchen, right?

Suzanne: Right, exactly—and in that process, there's always a time period where you don't have any kitchen at all.

Andrew: Well, Suzanne, I've been to your house before and I thought your kitchen was quite nice, actually, but you are renovating it? Why did you decide to renovate?

Suzanne: Well, the kitchen is pretty old and really inefficient, so things are not set up in the most efficient way, which makes storage and usability a little bit more difficult.

Andrew: Well, Suzanne, today we're going to do a Chatterbox episode. And in our Chatterbox series, what we do is we chat, we have natural conversations and we let you guys listen in and, at the same time, we will break down any interesting vocabulary or expressions for you.



Andrew: And today, Suzanne, our theme is your kitchen renovation. Who could have guessed? And, guys, before we get started here, I want to remind you that the best way to study with this episode is by downloading our learning materials, which include the transcript for this episode, along with detailed vocabulary explanations and examples, plus a quiz. So, to download the learning materials you just need to visit our website, Culips.com, and sign up to become a member.

OK, Suzanne, so let's get into it here. Your kitchen renovation, you told us just a second ago that you're renovating because you wanna update the layout. What's the first step when you decide to renovate your kitchen? I'm sure it's a big job, are you doing it yourself?

Suzanne: We're kind of doing it ourselves and I'll explain that in a second. But we own our apartment, so when you want to resell your house or your apartment, it's great to make these renovations or even upgrades, small or large upgrades, because they really add value to your house and help you to resell, and get a profit, which is great.

Andrew: No doubt about that.

Suzanne: We like making a profit, right?

Andrew: Yes.

Suzanne: But the first thing you have to do when you decide to do a renovation or an upgrade is to look at the budget.

Andrew: Oh, 'cause if there's anything I know about construction, especially construction in Montreal, is that things always go over budget.

Suzanne: Always more than you think it does. So, we had to look at the budget and say, OK, this is how much we have total to do this project, but if we can first aim for this amount, a smaller amount, right? We know we have about \$5 000 to \$10 000 to play with. So, we know, OK, if we aim for \$15 000 to \$20 000 for the renovation, then we know we actually have maybe a little extra for those mistakes or maybe upgrades that we would like to add on later.

Andrew: That makes a lot of sense. Yeah, that's a smart way to do it, to have a little wiggle room in the budget, in case you want to change something, yeah.

Suzanne: Yes, wiggle room, yeah.

Andrew: OK, so I imagine that you'd have to what, make a blueprint? Or make a design about what the new kitchen would look like? That must have been really fun. I think I would like that step of the process.



- Suzanne: It was really fun. So first we actually contacted a few designers and we had them come over to our house and we interviewed them. And they took measurements and they went away and then they came back to us with some plans, some drawings, some **mock-ups** of the kitchen. After that, we picked our favourite and she was a little more expensive than the other ones, but she uses **eco-friendly** materials. So the materials are made without any chemicals, which we thought would be great. So, oh my gosh, so we found the designer, her plan was so good, she really made it look so efficient. We were just awestruck, we were like what! This is brilliant. But it does require knocking down a wall and also building a whole new closet.
- Andrew: OK, knocking down a wall and building a closet. Now I'm probably the only one listening to this conversation that's familiar with the interior layout of your house.
- Suzanne: Right.
- Andrew: But maybe you could share a picture with us later as well?
- Suzanne: Absolutely.
- Andrew: But, which wall are we talking about here?
- Suzanne: The wall that separates the dining room from the kitchen.
- Andrew: OK, so you're going to have more of an open-concept feeling.
- Suzanne: Exactly.
- Andrew: Ah, I like it.
- Suzanne: And we will have what's called a peninsula.
- Andrew: Now what is that?
- Suzanne: A countertop that connects the kitchen to the dining room, and it jets out from one wall and similar to, you know, a peninsula in the world. Like Florida, for example, it jets out into the ocean. So it does the same thing, it kind of hangs out there, right between the kitchen and the dining room. And we're building a closet along the wall in the dining room for storage and to hide our appliances, like the washing machine and the dryer.
- Andrew: Ah, OK, interesting.
- Suzanne: Yeah.
- Andrew: Now have you decided on a material for the countertop?



- Suzanne: That's actually the last thing we have to decide.
- Andrew: Oh, OK, so there's lots of options right? When it comes to countertop material.
- Suzanne: We are actually having two different countertops.
- Andrew: OK.
- Suzanne: So the one for the peninsula is like a maple, like a wood.
- Andrew: Oh, nice.
- Suzanne: And the ones that are in the kitchen are going to be quartz.
- Andrew: OK, quartz.
- Suzanne: Yeah.
- Andrew: So a stone?
- Suzanne: Yeah, exactly.
- Andrew: Very cool.
- Suzanne: And it's a less expensive but very, very durable stone.
- Andrew: It's funny that we're talking about renovations today, because actually on the website Reddit there is a sub-Reddit called DIY, do it yourself, and people post pictures of their DIY projects, and today somebody posted some pictures of a renovation that he did to his basement. He turned his whole basement into an apartment that he plans to rent out to tenants.
- Suzanne: Wow.
- Andrew: And he built a kitchen in this apartment, obviously, and he was talking about the countertop material and he chose granite countertops. And I **was blown away** by how expensive this countertop is. It's crazy, thousands of dollars for a countertop.
- Suzanne: Yeah, granite is more expensive. We like a pretty clean, I would say neutral, sort of look. So we are going with quartz, because there is less busyness or design into it, it's a little more neutral.
- Andrew: Correct me if I'm wrong, but quartz is kind of light-coloured? Sometimes it's white, sometimes it's pink. Is this true?



- Suzanne: Yeah, it tends to be a lighter colour, it can also be black, or grey, and sometimes it even has the look of, like, marble, but it tends to be a lighter colour. It's true.
- Andrew: Right on. Now you brought up an interesting point just a second ago, talking about the colours, because I'm assuming this is also a big decision you need to make, the colour scheme of the kitchen. And I know that you have a lot of natural light coming into your kitchen, so maybe that's why you decided to go with the light and bright colour scheme? Or tell us a little bit about the colour choices?
- Suzanne: Yeah, so we have kind of a two-toned kitchen.
- Andrew: Two-tone?
- Suzanne: It's kind of, it's kind of in these days, I don't know.
- Andrew: Popular.
- Suzanne: It's kind of the new, the new fad, new trend. So we have—dark hardwood floors will be in the kitchen, we picked out a birch, and birch trees have really nice wood grains on them, they kind of vary from piece to piece, so it gives it some character, some personality in the floor.
- Andrew: Mmhmm.
- Suzanne: I don't know, I don't know, do you ever really want your floor to have personality? But.
- Andrew: Uh, yeah! Why not?
- Suzanne: So that's gonna be a dark colour and it's not too, too dark, but it's definitely the darkest part of the room. And then we have grey cabinets, like Shaker style, and on top, white cabinets that are not Shaker style. They're more totally sleek and flat, and so it kind of makes the kitchen a little more seamless looking.
- Andrew: Wait, I'm gonna interrupt you here, because I think I don't know what Shaker style means, and if I don't know, then I'm assuming our listeners also don't know. So, can you explain to me what Shaker style means? I've probably seen it, but I just haven't paid attention to kitchen cabinets.
- Suzanne: You might even have them in your kitchen now.
- Andrew: It's possible, yeah.



- Suzanne: If you google this on Pinterest, which is a website, you know, that you can find pictures and ideas and make a board, and pin pictures that you like onto a board. If you go to Pinterest, you'll definitely see a ton of Shaker-style cabinet ideas. But if I were to explain it here, it really just means that there's kind of a thick border around the edge of the cabinet, like a flat, thick border around the cabinet.
- Andrew: Ah, I got the visual, I understand.
- Suzanne: And the other ones, the ones on the top, I'm going to show you guys, I'm gonna send some cool blueprints or pictures, so that you can all see the before picture of the kitchen before we did the renovation, you'll see the blueprints, and then you'll see the finished product, as well. And so you can compare, say wait, that's not the same!
- Andrew: So, guys check out our Facebook page, Facebook.com/CulipsPodcast, and you'll be able to see these pics.
- Suzanne: Yeah, so the top ones are really slick, they don't have any border and no handle. In fact, the handle is carved into the bottom of the cabinet. Your hand fits into the groove of the cabinet and you just pull.
- Andrew: Gotcha.
- Suzanne: So all the drawers in the bottom cabinets are a grey colour, the top are white, and the countertops will be a lighter white-grey sort of marbled quartz. We'll have a few floating shelves that are dark wood, and it's reclaimed wood, so this is like recycled wood, that's been used from a barn or something like that, yeah.
- Andrew: Lovely.
- Suzanne: Yeah, and a backsplash. Do you guys know what a backsplash is?
- Andrew: Backsplash? OK, I'm going to take a guess, I think the backsplash is the tile behind the sink, is that correct?
- Suzanne: Yeah! Exactly.
- Andrew: Woohoo.
- Suzanne: And sometimes it goes behind the oven.
- Andrew: And the counter and the cabinets.
- Suzanne: Yeah, and so that we haven't picked out yet. So that should be a colour in the same general, you know, grey-white tone.



- Andrew: Same tone range.
- Suzanne: Exactly.
- Andrew: Now, let's talk about rippin' apart your old kitchen.
- Suzanne: The fun part.
- Andrew: 'Cause this is probably the most fun. Did you hire a demolition crew to do this, or did you get in there and swing the hammer yourself?
- Suzanne: So, we have hired a demolition crew. However, I would really also like to help out, because I think it's really fun to swing the hammer and see the wall **crack open**, don't you?
- Andrew: It would be great for stress, releasing stress.
- Suzanne: Sure, you know when you just have a tough day, take a hammer to the wall. Break it down.
- Andrew: Screw you, wall!
- Suzanne: So, we're gonna be, we'll have a crew for that, they're the same crew who will be building the new closet. And putting down the floors, as well, and that begins soon.
- Andrew: OK, so you haven't actually demolished the old kitchen yet?
- Suzanne: Not yet, no. There's a website here in Canada called Kijiji, and we can kind of resell old items and clothes and things like that on that website, and we're going to put our cabinets up on that website and ask whomever wants to get them for free can come and take them off the wall.
- Andrew: Somebody for sure will do that, absolutely. What is your timeline for this project? Like, when do you expect it will be completed?
- Suzanne: Everything will be done around—so August and September, like by mid-September.
- Andrew: When your kitchen is under renovation, what are you gonna do? Does that mean you get to go, go eat out?



- Suzanne: Totally. You have to put that in the budget! Actually, we have a really great roof terrace and a big barbecue and, since, it's summer, we will be able to spend a lot of meals up on the roof. And we'll also get a small refrigerator, a mini fridge. So we're gonna get one of those and we're gonna get also a hot plate, so it's like a single burner that you would use as your stove. And you plug it in, it's electric, and you can boil water. You can sauté some **veggies**, so, yeah, so it's gonna be what we will call a makeshift kitchen.
- Andrew: Makeshift kitchen, yeah, on the terrace, that sounds awesome.
- Suzanne: Yeah, so we'll put it up there, or I think we might keep the appliances, the electrical appliances downstairs in the dining room, and then we'll probably spend more time outside on the roof terrace. Gotta bring that sunscreen.
- Andrew: Yeah, that's for sure. Well, Suzanne, we're almost out of time here. But I have one last question for you.
- Suzanne: Sure.
- Andrew: And that is, during this renovation process, has there been anything that surprised you, so far?
- Suzanne: Well, so far it hasn't been that surprising, but what I'm scared about is when we pull up some of the floor or take out some of the cabinets, that we're going to find some scary surprises. Like dun dun dun, oh no! There's a pipe broken or this electrical line is old and breaking or there's mould in this floor.
- Andrew: That's how you can go over budget really quickly.
- Suzanne: Exactly.
- Andrew: But wouldn't it be cool, if you found, like, an old letter or old coin or something under the floor boards?
- Suzanne: Yeah, like a secret treasure.
- Andrew: Yeah, I'm crossing my fingers for that.
- Suzanne: Yeah, I hope that's the kind of surprise we find.
- Andrew: Well, Sue, lots of changes ahead for you in the coming months, new kitchen.
- Suzanne: Yes.
- Andrew: Yeah, I'm super excited to check out this new renovation, I wanna see exactly what it looks like. I'm sure it's going to be amazing. But, yeah,

everybody please check our Facebook page again for those pictures, and I will be eagerly awaiting them as well.

Suzanne: Yeah, I think that those will make it a lot more fun. I know it's not always interesting listening to someone else's renovation plans. But the suspense will definitely keep you going, and I hope that you guys like the finished product, me too! I hope I like it too. So I would love to hear your thoughts when you see the pictures.

Andrew: Right on! Well, we'll leave it at that for today. Thanks for listening, everybody. Again, if you wanna get the learning materials for this episode, visit our website, Culips.com, to learn all about how you can sign up and become a member and access those materials. Suzanne, thanks for talking with me today. I hope you have a lovely rest of your day.

Suzanne: Thanks, Andrew, you too.

Andrew: We'll be back soon with another Culips episode, everybody. Talk to you then, bye.

Suzanne: Bye.

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Detailed Explanations

A veggie

The noun **a veggie** means a vegetable, an edible part of a plant. **A veggie** is an informal or slang term that should only be used in casual conversation, not in formal writing.

When used as an adjective, **veggie** means either vegetable or vegetarian. If something is vegetarian, it does not contain any meat or fish. For example, if you're having a dinner party and your friend says that they brought a **veggie** platter, they mean that they brought a platter of vegetables. Likewise, if this same friend were to say they brought a **veggie** dish, they mean that they brought a dish with no meat or fish. So unless you see just vegetables, chances are, when used as an adjective, **veggie** means vegetarian.

It is very common for English-speaking Canadians to shorten words in casual conversation and on social media. Here are some examples of common shortened words:

- Vacay, which means vacation
- Reno, which means renovation
- Fab, which means fabulous

Here are a couple more examples with **a veggie**:

Ross:	Have you tried the new burger joint around the block?
Gordon:	Not yet, but I've heard great things. Want to check it out after work today?
Ross:	Sure! Hopefully, they'll have some veggie menu items. I'm trying to avoid eating meat.
Gordon:	Most places nowadays have a few non-meat options. I'm sure they'll have something for you to eat.

Rachel:	I think I've thought of everything for the party on Saturday. Am I missing anything?
Kennedy:	What about veggies ? Are you going to have a veggie platter and dip?
Rachel:	Right! I almost forgot about vegetables. I'll add veggie platter and dip to the menu!

A mock-up

A mock-up means a model or replica of a design, device, or structure before it has been built. In other words, **a mock-up** is a miniature representation of something that has yet to be made.

A mock-up is often used during the early stages of a project to give everyone involved in the project a good idea of the intended design, device, or structure. For example, in this episode, Suzanne mentions that she had designers come to her place to create **mock-ups** of possible kitchens. By creating models of possible kitchens, the designers showed Suzanne what her finished kitchen could look like. So **a mock-up** is a model or a small construct to show the appearance of something.

A mock-up can be either a physical or digital representation of something. If you are planning to renovate your kitchen, a cardboard representation of the new cabinets or countertops would be **a mock-up**. Likewise, a digital representation of the new cabinets and countertops on the computer would also be **a mock-up**.

Here are a couple more examples with **a mock-up**:

Charles:	I'm thinking about redoing my basement, but I'm having a hard time picturing how it will look when I'm done.
Karen:	Do you have a general idea of what you want it to look like?
Charles:	Yeah, I've figured out the whole layout of what I'd like to do, but I'm having trouble with the details.
Karen:	My brother has a computer program you can use. He can create a mock-up of what you're thinking of doing, so you can see what the end result will look like.
Charles:	That would be wonderful. Thank you.

Lloyd:	How do you like your new job working for the city?
Mabel:	It's a blast! I'm working on a big project where we have to decide on a design for the new park in the downtown core.
Lloyd:	Wow, that must be a lot of work. There are so many details to think about.
Mabel:	Yes, it's a lot of work, but we spent a lot of time on our mock-up , so we have a good idea what direction we want the project to move in.



To crack open

The phrasal verb **to crack open** has several meanings: to open something, to break something open, or to expose something. It's important to remember that to crack does not mean the same thing as **to crack open**. The word open helps to determine the meaning.

First, **to crack open** can mean to open something. For example, if you open a window, you could say, "I **cracked open** a window." In North America, this meaning of **to crack open** is often used when talking about opening a bottle of wine or can of beer.

Second, **to crack open** can mean to break or split something open. For example, if an earthquake splits a house in half, you could say, "The earthquake **cracked the house open**." Chances are, if someone is talking about a broken object and they use **to crack open**, they mean that the object was split all the way open. It wasn't just chipped or didn't just develop a crack—it was opened up from damage.

Third, **to crack open** can mean to expose or reveal something. This meaning of **to crack open** is often used when talking about solving a mystery. For example, if a detective has been working to solve a case and they finally figure it out, you could say, "The detective **cracked the case open**." In other words, **to crack open** can mean to figure something out or solve a mystery.

Here are a couple more examples with **to crack open**:

Jody:	Honey, are you going to get started on painting my office this weekend?
Phil:	As a matter of fact, I've already prepped the area and was just about to crack open a can of primer.
Jody:	You're wonderful. Thank you!

Martha:	How's retirement treating you? Do you miss working as a police officer?
Hank:	I'm having a hard time adjusting. I spent most of my life working. Just this morning, I found myself thinking about the case that I was finally able to crack open before I retired. It had me stumped for the better part of two decades.
Martha:	At least you were able to solve it before you retired.
Hank:	That's a good point. I'm glad that I could put it to rest.

To be blown away

To be blown away by something means to be shocked or amazed by something. This expression can be used to describe actions, objects, people, or places that significantly impress you.

Although **to be blown away** is often associated with a positive reaction, it can also be used to refer to a strong negative reaction. For example, you may **be blown away** by an exciting book that you read, or you may **be blown away** by the amount of bad news on television.

To understand the expression **to be blown away**, imagine you are renovating your kitchen and you hire a designer, like Suzanne did, to help you. If the designer presents you with a **mock-up** that you absolutely love, you could say, “I **was blown away** by the **mock-up**.”

So **to be blown away** can be used to describe something, someone, or somewhere that elicits an emotion of shock, awe, or excitement.

Here are a couple more examples with **to be blown away**:

Charlotte:	Have you given any thought to what kind of floor you want to have installed in your new place?
Vicky:	I think so. I went to a home renovation centre on the weekend to look at some options, and I was really impressed by the different types of wood.
Charlotte:	Which was your favourite?
Vicky:	The Brazilian Teak really blew me away . It's expensive, but I'm gonna talk to Rick and see if we can swing it. I just love the colour and texture.

Mitchel:	Did you hear about Joe?
Cameron:	Yup, I still can't believe he would do something so horrible. It really blows me away how people can be so mean and intolerant in this day and age.
Mitchel:	I hear you. It's disgusting how he vandalized that poor family's house and wrote racist obscenities everywhere.
Cameron:	I hope the family presses charges, and he goes to jail.
Mitchel:	Agreed.



To be eco-friendly

The word eco is short for the word ecology. Therefore, **to be eco-friendly** means to not be harmful to the environment. Certain chemicals and products may be dangerous and pose a hazard, whether it's to animals or plant life. If something poses a danger to the environment, it's not **eco-friendly**, whereas if something is not harmful to the environment, it's **eco-friendly**.

In recent years, awareness of the planet and how humans can have an impact on the planet has grown. In Canada, there is an increasing market for goods and services that do not harm the environment and that minimize waste. For example, many grocery stores will charge you extra money for plastic bags to encourage you to bring reusable shopping bags and reduce the amount of plastic in the world, since the accumulation of plastic destroys wildlife and habitats. By helping to reduce the amount of plastic in the world, grocery stores **are being eco-friendly**. If you bring reusable shopping bags to the grocery store, you also **are being eco-friendly**.

So **to be eco-friendly** means to not be harmful or dangerous to the environment.

Here are a couple more examples with **to be eco-friendly**:

Mavis:	I'm glad it's a long weekend. I can finally get started on my spring cleaning.
Harvey:	What kind of cleaning products do you use?
Mavis:	I don't use store-bought cleaners anymore. I found the fumes would make me cough. I use a combination of lemon juice, vinegar, and elbow grease to get things clean.
Harvey:	What a great idea! I'm so happy that people are finally paying attention to how they affect the environment and are using eco-friendly products.

Sherman:	I just found out that my city is planning to pass a bill banning home fireplaces and wood stoves.
Lilith:	How come?
Sherman:	Well, the smoke from them is polluting the atmosphere. Although some fireplaces and wood stoves are eco-friendly and have fantastic air filters, it's easier for the city to just ban them from all homes.
Lilith:	I can see the logic.

Quiz

1. True or false: If something is eco-friendly, it is not harmful to the environment.

- a) true
- b) false

2. Which of the following is the best example of a mock-up?

- a) a fashion model
- b) a model building
- c) a kitchen
- d) a computer

3. Mary is visiting Canada for the first time. She's extremely impressed with the scenery. In other words, Mary's _____ by the scenery.

- a) blown away
- b) blown up
- c) blown open
- d) blown around

4. True or false: To crack open only means to break something open.

- a) true
- b) false

5. Which of the following is the best example of a veggie food item?

- a) sausages
- b) salmon
- c) dip
- d) carrots

Quiz Answers

1.a 2.b 3.a 4.b 5.d

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