

# Is Banquette Seating in the Kitchen a Do or a Don't

A pair of design experts tell us why they love, or would sooner walk away from, the community-seating option

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Photo: Hector Sanchez courtesy of Barry Goralnick



Love them or hate them, **banquettes** are a decorating staple in U.S. kitchens. Fans consider them ideal for family breakfasts or the perfect perch for late-night leftovers. They can be a lot like a booth in an old-fashioned roadside diner. Other partisans note that upholstered built-ins dial back the chaotic display of chair legs, and that a banquette will soften a kitchen, with its profusion of hard surfaces, using literally yards of highly textured or patterned fabric. But the argument against the look centers on the potential cost of that fabric, as well as other pragmatic considerations. Detractors suggest you skip built-in banquettes altogether in favor of a small breakfast table with loose chairs, set beneath a petite chandelier. Below, two designers tangle in the debate: For kitchens, are banquettes a do or a don't?

## Melissa Morgan Says: "Don't"

San Antonio-based designer [Melissa Morgan](#) admits she has "nightmares about banquettes." The former attorney considers them messy and an impractical maintenance challenge. Jumbled cushions need constant straightening and will get stained by kids and dogs. L-shaped banquettes often serve only two people, unless someone volunteers to be trapped in the middle. Morgan also notes that built-ins make future renovations or room conversions more of a hassle, demanding a great deal of messy construction. "So two little chairs are the better option when you need to squeeze a breakfast table into an awkward corner."

## Barry Goralnick Says: "Do"

Designer [Barry Goralnick](#), who has created homes for actor John Lithgow and author Erica Jong, fell for a neighbor's dramatic red-velvet banquette as a suburban Boston kid, in the 1960s. Now designing apartments in New York City, he finds banquettes essential. "In limited space, free-floating tables demand room for people to walk behind the chairs." Not so with a wall-hugging banquette. "You save a lot of room." He also hides storage in the bench beneath loose cushions and deftly counters the practicality argument. "When you get a corner booth in a [restaurant](#), it feels romantic."