

OTTAWA BASEMENTS

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# Kitchen Renovations

Questions about kitchen remodeling, cabinets,  
countertops, and appliances

3 Expert Answers from Construction Brain

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## Does a basement kitchenette suit a single tenant better than a full Ottawa kitchen?

**For a single tenant, a well-designed basement kitchenette often suits daily needs perfectly well — but whether it's the right choice depends on your zoning, your tenant's lifestyle, and your long-term rental goals.**

A kitchenette typically includes a compact refrigerator, a two-burner cooktop or induction plate, a microwave, and a single-basin sink. For one person who cooks occasionally or relies on simple meals, this setup is genuinely functional. The trade-off is that serious home cooks or long-term tenants who want to feel more "at home" will likely prefer a full kitchen with a four-burner stove, full-size fridge, and dedicated counter space. Tenant expectations in Ottawa's rental market have risen considerably — especially as basement suites compete with purpose-built apartments.

**From a regulatory standpoint, the distinction matters more than most homeowners realize.** Under the Ontario Building Code and Ottawa's secondary suite requirements, a legal secondary dwelling unit must include cooking facilities — but the City of Ottawa doesn't strictly mandate a full kitchen. However, if you're registering a secondary suite (which you should, to protect yourself legally and for insurance purposes), the unit needs to meet habitability standards including adequate ventilation for cooking. A kitchenette with only a microwave and no exhaust may not satisfy an inspector depending on how it's configured. A proper range hood or ventilation solution is typically required regardless of kitchen size.

**On the cost side**, a kitchenette installation in an Ottawa basement generally runs **\$8,000–\$15,000** depending on cabinetry, appliances, and whether new plumbing rough-ins are needed. A full kitchen with standard finishes typically runs **\$18,000–\$30,000+**. The gap is significant, but a full kitchen meaningfully increases your rental income potential and the suite's resale appeal. In Ottawa's current rental market, a legal one-bedroom basement apartment with a full kitchen can command **\$1,400–\$1,800/month**, while a bachelor-style kitchenette unit typically sits closer to **\$1,100–\$1,400/month**.

**The honest professional guidance here** is that if budget is the primary driver, a kitchenette is a reasonable starting point — but build it permit-ready and leave room to upgrade. Rough in for a full stove connection (gas or 240V electrical) even if you install a two-burner cooktop today. That foresight costs very little upfront and gives you flexibility later without tearing apart finished walls.

If you're planning a legal secondary suite in Ottawa and want to make sure your kitchenette or full kitchen meets OBC requirements and City of Ottawa standards, Ottawa Basements offers free consultations — we can walk through your specific space and help you make the call that fits your budget and rental goals.

## Do I need makeup air if I install a range hood in my basement kitchen?

**Yes, you'll likely need makeup air for a basement range hood, especially if it's a high-CFM unit or part of a secondary suite.** The Ontario Building Code requires makeup air for range hoods over 400 CFM, and basement installations present unique ventilation challenges that often require careful air balance planning.

### Understanding Makeup Air Requirements

In a basement kitchen, makeup air becomes critical because basements are typically more sealed than main floors, and the space has limited natural air infiltration. When your range hood exhausts air outside, that air must be replaced from somewhere. Without proper makeup air, you'll create negative pressure that can cause backdrafting of your furnace, water heater, or fireplace - a serious safety hazard that can pull carbon monoxide into your living space.

The **Ontario Building Code** specifically requires makeup air systems for residential range hoods exceeding 400 CFM. However, even smaller units (300-400 CFM) in basement installations often benefit from makeup air due to the confined space and potential interaction with other mechanical systems. The Electrical Safety Authority (ESA) will inspect the installation to ensure it meets code requirements.

### Ottawa-Specific Considerations

In Ottawa's climate, makeup air systems need to account for our extreme temperature variations (-30°C to +35°C). A proper system will include a **makeup air damper** that opens when the range hood operates and closes when it's off, preventing energy loss. For secondary suites, which are common basement renovations in Ottawa, the makeup air system must be designed to maintain proper air balance between the upper and lower units while meeting the fire separation requirements.

### Professional Installation Requirements

This isn't a DIY project - makeup air systems require careful calculation of air volumes, proper ductwork sizing, and integration with your existing HVAC system. The work involves both electrical connections (requiring ESA permits) and mechanical ventilation that must be designed by someone who understands building science. Improper installation can create comfort issues, increase heating costs, or create dangerous backdrafting conditions.

### Next Steps

Have a qualified HVAC contractor assess your basement kitchen plans and calculate the required makeup air volume based on your range hood's CFM rating and the space's characteristics. For comprehensive basement kitchen renovations including proper ventilation design, contact Ottawa Basements for a free consultation. For full

kitchen renovations, visit our parent company at [JustynRookContracting.com](https://JustynRookContracting.com).

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## Can I have a full kitchen in my basement suite or just a kitchenette?

**You can have a full kitchen in your basement suite in Ottawa, not just a kitchenette.** The Ontario Building Code and City of Ottawa zoning bylaws don't restrict basement secondary suites to kitchenettes - they can include complete kitchens with full-size appliances, islands, and all the amenities of a main-floor kitchen.

The key requirements for basement suite kitchens in Ottawa focus on **safety and functionality rather than size limitations**. Your kitchen must have proper ventilation (typically requiring a range hood vented to the exterior), adequate electrical service for appliances, and proper plumbing connections. The kitchen needs to be separated from sleeping areas by walls or partitions, and if you're installing gas appliances, they require proper venting and TSSA-certified installation.

**Practical considerations** often influence kitchen size more than regulations. Basement ceiling height can limit upper cabinet options - most Ottawa basements have 7-8 foot ceilings, which works fine for standard kitchens but may require careful planning for ventilation and lighting. Access for appliance delivery is another factor; narrow basement stairs might limit your choices for refrigerators or ranges. Plumbing location often determines kitchen placement, as connecting to existing drain lines is more cost-effective than running new ones across the basement.

**Zoning compliance** in Ottawa requires your basement suite kitchen to be part of a self-contained unit with its own entrance, bathroom, and living space. The kitchen contributes to meeting minimum unit sizes - bachelor suites need 28 square meters total, one-bedroom units need 37 square meters. A full kitchen actually helps you meet these requirements more easily than a cramped kitchenette.

**Cost considerations** for full basement kitchens typically range from \$15,000-\$40,000 in Ottawa, depending on finishes and appliance choices. This includes electrical upgrades (often requiring a subpanel), plumbing rough-in, ventilation, cabinetry, and appliances. While more expensive than a kitchenette, a full kitchen significantly increases rental income potential and property value.

**Permit requirements** are the same whether you install a kitchenette or full kitchen - you'll need building permits for the suite conversion, electrical permits from ESA for new circuits, and plumbing permits for new connections. The City of Ottawa reviews the entire suite layout, not individual room sizes.

For a free consultation about your basement suite kitchen options and to ensure your plans meet all Ottawa requirements, contact Ottawa Basements. We'll help you design a kitchen that maximizes your space while meeting all code requirements.

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