

MARKET READY

Q. I have a built-in banquette in my kitchen. Should I reupholster it before trying to sell my home?

A. If you have a kitchen banquette that's covered with stained or worn fabric, it may be a good idea to reupholster it before opening your home to potential buyers.

"Oftentimes banquettes have a lot of food stains on them, or kids have been standing on them," said Gordon Roberts, a managing director at Warburg Realty in New York. "They can just look really beat up. That can be a distraction if the rest of the kitchen is showing well."

In that case, Mr. Roberts recommended re-covering it, because "it's a relatively inexpensive thing to do, and it will freshen a kitchen up," making the whole room look more appealing.

But if the rest of the kitchen is in poor condition as well, he said, reupholstering the banquette

might not be such a good investment. "If the kitchen is really old and needs to be gutted," he said, "then reupholstering the banquette is not going to save the day."

Philip Gorrivan, a New York interior designer who frequently uses banquettes in his projects, said that they can be a good selling point because they are a very efficient use of space. "I always tell my clients they should have them," he said.

For a high-traffic area like the kitchen, Mr. Gorrivan said, he almost always has banquettes upholstered in a fabric that's suitable for indoor and outdoor use. "It's engineered really well, and any stains come out of the fibers," he said. "It lasts forever."

Indoor-outdoor fabrics have come a long way from the stiff, uncomfortable textiles of yesteryear, he added. "You'd be amazed: usually, you can't even tell that it's an outdoor fabric," he said. "They've gotten so good and so chic that you can even get indoor-outdoor velvets." Some of his favorite manufacturers include DeLany & Long, Duralee, Knoll and Perennials.

If you've already selected a fabric that isn't naturally stain-

resistant, Mr. Gorrivan said, you could have it treated by a fabric protection service like Fiber-Seal, "but I really think that indoor-outdoor fabric is a better way to go."

Mr. Gorrivan recommends a fabric with a small-scale pattern or subtle color variations, rather than a solid color. "The more texture or pattern, the more sins you can hide," he said. "I would go with a tight, textured pattern, like a nice weave."

You might also want to take a close look at the condition of the upholstery in the rest of your home, even if you'll be taking most of it with you. If your furniture is dirty, most of it can be steam-cleaned, Mr. Roberts said. "The couch, the chairs and the slipcovers."

It doesn't cost much, he said, and it will help give buyers the best impression of your home.

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Questions about repairs or re-decorating done in preparation for putting a home on the market may be sent to marketready@nytimes.com. Unpublished questions cannot be answered individually.

