DIY Pantry Makeover

Replace wobbly wire racks with sturdy custom shelving and two base cabinets for small appliances and kitchen items you don't use often. You can customize this design to fit your pantry.



Before (left) and after (right)

Tools

- [ ] Miter saw or circular saw
- [ ] Table saw
- [ ] Brad nailer with brad nails
- [ ] Hand sander
- [ ] Cordless drill or impact driver
- [ ] Kreg Jig
- [ ] Tape measure
- [ ] Level
- [ ] Utility knife
- [ ] Hammer or pry bar
- [ ] Nail set
- [ ] Putty knife

- [ ] Caulk gun
- [ ] Sanding block
- [ ] Safety glasses

Supplies

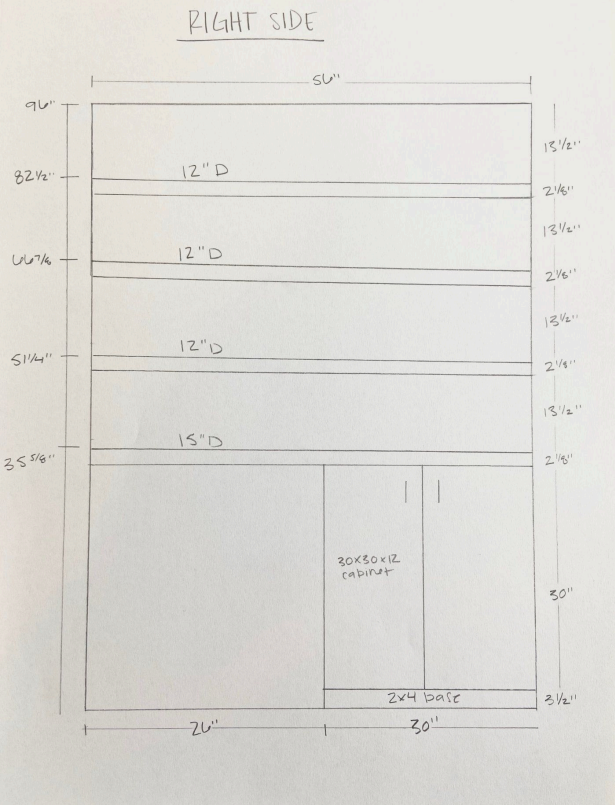
- [ ] Upper kitchen cabinets (2), 30" x 30" x 12"
- [ ] Cabinet pulls
- [ ] 3 1/2" construction screws
- [ ] Pocket screws: 2 1/2" and 2"
- [ ] Wood glue
- [ ] Wood filler
- [ ] Paintable caulk
- [ ] Sandpaper (80, 120, 220 grit)
- [ ] Drywall spackling and mesh tape
- [ ] Wall texture spray
- [ ] Painters tape and painting supplies
- [ ] Paint for walls: Agreeable Gray, Sherwin-Williams
- [ ] Paint for shelves: Swiss Coffee, Behr
- [ ] Stain: Early American, Varathane
- [ ] Polyurethane: satin, Varathane

Lumber list

Qty	Dimension	Used for
2	4' x 8' x 1/2" sanded plywood	Top of shelves
2	4' x 8' x 1/8" hardboard	Bottom of shelves
2	1" x 6" x 8' select pine board	Trim for shelves
15	2" x 2" x 8' strip	Framing for shelves
3	2" x 4" x 8' treated lumber	Base for cabinets
As needed	3 1/4" base trim	Base trim
As needed	Quarter round shoe trim	Base trim

Pantry plan

The lumber list is for my pantry dimensions below. The right and left walls are the same dimension.



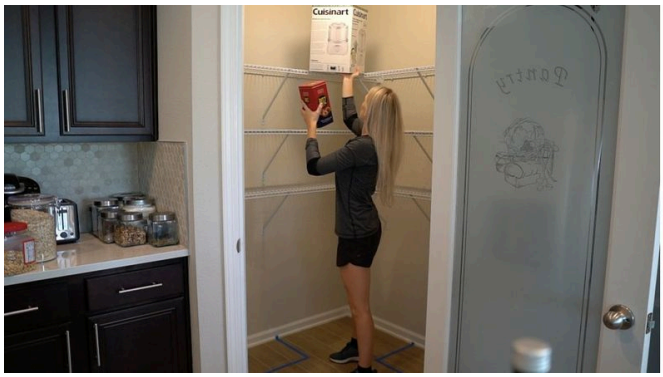
Cost

Item	Cost
Lumber	$158
Base trim	$32
Paint, stain, poly	$60
Cabinets (2)	$170
Cabinet pulls	$60
Total	**$480**

Prices from 2020. This plan contains affiliate links. If you buy through one, I earn a small commission at no extra cost to you.

Step 1: Remove everything from the pantry

Take everything out of the pantry so you have room to work.





Step 2: Take out the wire racks

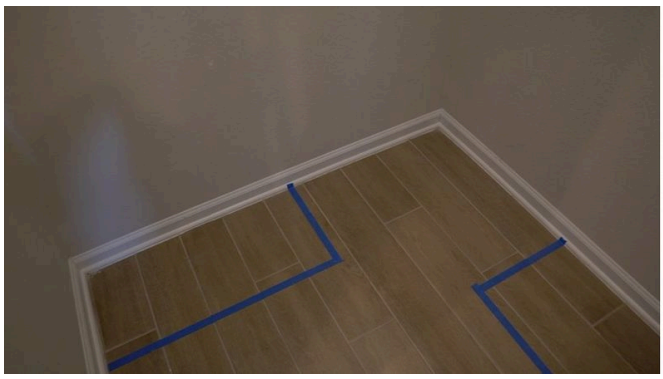
If you have existing racks or shelving that you need to remove, now is the time to do it.



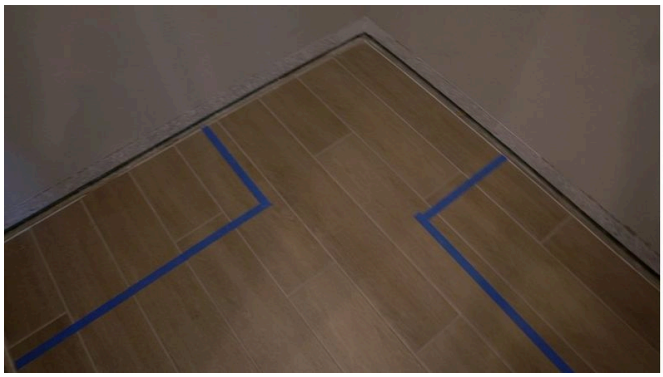
Step 3: Remove the baseboard

For my cabinets to fit snug in the corners, I removed all of the baseboard. You could remove only the corner baseboard where the cabinet sits, but I took it all out and installed new baseboard so I didn't have to match old and new.

Use a utility knife to score the caulk on the top and bottom of the baseboard. Use a hammer or pry bar to pry the trim away from the wall. Be careful not to dent your walls.







Step 4: Build the frame for the cabinets

I used treated 2" x 4" lumber to build a base for the cabinets, in case of moisture or accidental spills on the floor. My cabinets are 30" wide, 30" tall and 12" deep. I made the base frame 30" wide by 15" deep.

Screw the 2×4s together with 3 1/2" construction screws. Check that the base is level, and use wood shims if it isn't. Once it's level, use a stud finder to find the studs and screw the base into the bottom of the studs. This keeps the base sturdy and secure.

I wanted the bottom countertop to be 15" deep instead of 12", so I made the base 15" and set the cabinet flush with the front of the base. That leaves a couple inch gap between the back of the cabinet and the wall, which is fine.





Step 5: Install the cabinets

Make sure the cabinets are level and flush with the front and side of the 2×4 base. Cut extra 2×4s into blocking to fit behind the cabinet and the wall. Screw the cabinet into the blocking, then into the studs in the back and side walls so the cabinets are secure.





Step 6: Install the 2x2 frame

I used 2" x 2" strips for the shelf framing. Your framing measurements will differ depending on your pantry size and how deep you want your shelves.

I wanted the bottom shelf to be 15" deep. To account for the 3/4" front trim piece, the framing ends at 14 1/4". I wanted the 3 upper shelves 12" deep, so that framing is 11 1/4" deep.

The photos below show how I laid out the framing pieces. Drill pocket holes in all the center framing pieces and secure them with pocket screws. Screw every 2×2 that sits against a wall into a stud with 3 1/2" screws so it's secure.

The pantry was too tight to build the frames in the garage and install them whole, so I pieced the framing together inside the pantry. Start with the long pieces against the back wall, then the shorter side pieces along the side walls, then the 2 long front pieces, then fill in the shorter middle pieces.











Step 7: Cut and dry fit the 1/2" plywood

Once all the framing is in, cut and dry fit the 1/2" plywood to the top of the shelves. I used a plain square cut on the top 3 shelves and a 45 degree cut on the bottom countertop.

Only dry fit the plywood now so you can take it out to the garage for sanding. Label the bottom of each board so you know where it goes.







Left: bottom shelf, 45 degree miter cut. Right: top 3 shelves, straight cut.

Step 8: Install the 1/8" hardboard

Install 1/8" hardboard on the bottom of every shelf so the framing doesn't show. I cut the hardboard on the table saw for the 11 1/4" shelves and with a circular saw for the 14 1/4" shelves. Secure it to the bottom of the framing with wood glue and 1" brad nails.




I also installed hardboard on the visible side of the cabinets. It covers the gap between the cabinet and the back wall.

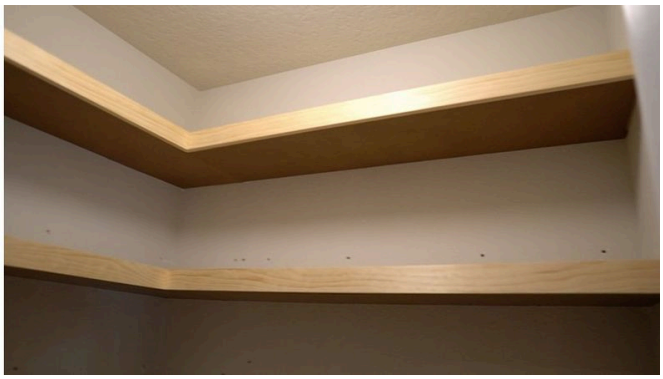


Step 9: Cut and dry fit the trim pieces

Now that you can see the total shelf depth, cut the trim pieces to match. My shelves are about 2 1/8" deep (1/8" hardboard + 1 1/2" frame + 1/2" plywood). I ripped a 1" x 6" x 8' select pine board down to 2 1/8" on the table saw.

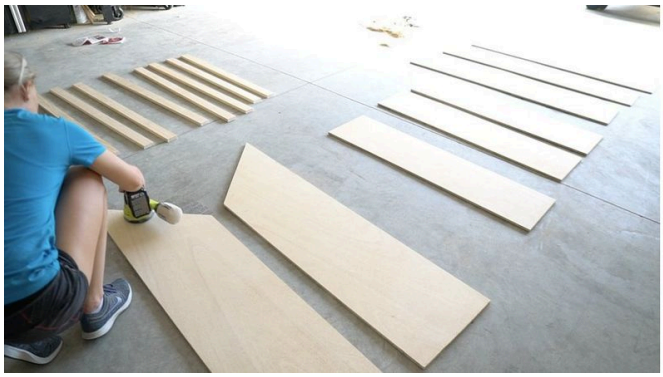
Miter the center corner at 45 degrees so the pieces meet at a perfect 90 degree angle. Dry fit the trim first to make sure it fits, and label each piece so you can return it to the right place.





Step 10: Sand the plywood and trim

Once the plywood and trim fit, take them to the garage and sand everything. You don't need to sand the hardboard. Start with 80 grit, then 120, then 220 to get the shelves and trim smooth. Knock down the sharp corners of the trim with sandpaper too.



Step 11: Install the plywood and trim

Install the plywood first, then the trim, with wood glue and 1 1/2" brad nails.





Step 12: Patch the holes in the drywall

Fill the holes left from the wire racks with mesh tape and spackling. Once the spackling is dry, smooth the patches with a sanding block. My walls are textured, so I sprayed wall texture over the smooth patches so they blend in once painted. I set the spray to the medium option to match my wall texture. Cover your shelves before spraying.









Step 13: Fill holes and cracks with wood filler

Fill ALL of the cracks and nail holes with wood filler, including the nail holes in the 1/8" hardboard. Once the filler is dry, sand the high spots with a sanding block.



Step 14: Caulk all the seams

Clean up all the dust before you caulk. Tape off the shelves with painters tape, leaving a 1/8" gap between the tape and the shelf. Apply a thin bead of caulk, then smooth the line with a wet finger.

Remove the tape before the caulk dries, or you'll ruin the caulk line. I let mine dry before peeling the tape and had to re-caulk everything.







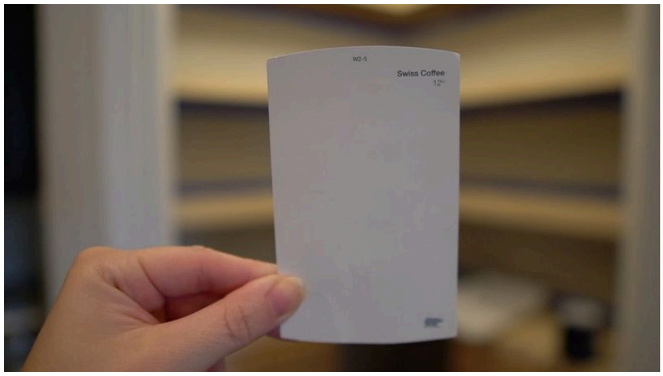


Step 15: Paint or stain

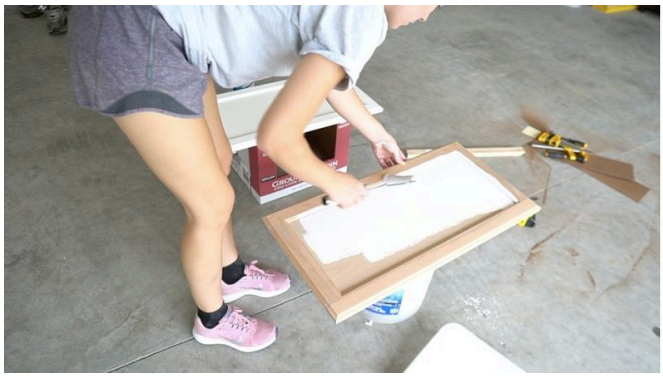
Paint or stain your shelves and cabinets. I touched up the walls with Agreeable Gray by Sherwin-Williams. The shelves are Swiss Coffee by Behr, and the countertop is stained Early American by Varathane.















Step 16: Install the base trim

I used 3 1/4" base trim. It wasn't tall or wide enough, so I added quarter round shoe trim at the bottom. Install your trim with brad nails. Then fill the nail holes with wood filler, let it dry, sand the high spots, caulk the seams and finish with a coat of paint. I used the same Swiss Coffee paint on the base trim.







Step 17: Install the cabinet hardware

I bought this cabinet hardware from Home Depot to match the rest of our kitchen hardware.



Step 18: Poly the countertop

Finish the countertop with 3 coats of satin polyurethane. Follow the instructions on the can for technique and dry times.



More from this project

- Watch the full YouTube tutorial
- How I designed this pantry in SketchUp (watch the video)
- The final pantry reveal, all organized