

# Seeing the light in the all-important kitchen (Photos)

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All rooms in our homes are not created equal. Such is the case with the kitchen, a room that draws us for some of the most important activities we experience at home. I asked John Starck, Jr., principal of [Showcase Kitchens of New York](#), to give us some of his tips for [lighting](#)

the room with efficiency and beauty—two aspects of design that are often seen as disparate. In his own words:

Lighting is a critical element in the design of any space, especially a kitchen where there is surely a variety of lighting needs. You will want to consider task lighting under cabinetry and decorative lighting to highlight the contents of your cabinets, but since much of the food preparation takes place on the center island, as in the examples shown, high-wattage work lighting is essential. Each design shows a variation on that theme, one using a chandelier, another using a more contemporary pendant with three connected lights, yet another with three individual pendants mounted in the ceiling, and the last having individual pendants with detailed glass surrounding the bulbs.

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Now for the type of lighting: ask yourself whether direct or indirect light is more suitable. Considering the purpose of the lighting is critical. Is it dedicated to lighting an eating area where you would want indirect or diffused lighting? Or are you illuminating a cook top, sink or work area where a direct, brighter light source is required? Examples of indirect lighting are ceiling mounted fixtures with glass diffusers and chandeliers with a number of low wattage bulbs. Direct lighting examples would be pendants that send illumination towards the countertop below, such as in the four examples provided.

Line voltage and low voltage halogen offer uniquely different results within the same type of fixtures. The mandate to change over to energy efficient lighting is well underway and it is suggested that all lighting decisions consider these solutions. The good news is that over the last few years, energy efficient bulbs have come a long way. They not only save approximately one-third on your utility bill and help conserve energy, they now come in varieties that provide a warmer light source than the original "fluorescent-style" energy savers. Be sure to check for the Energy Star of approval on the label.

On the decorative side, the choice of light fixtures will have a profound effect on the "feel" of the space. Some of the glass shades available today are true works of art, offering stunning colors and shapes, such as those from the Murano area of Italy. Fabric shades, which are typically more traditional, are experiencing a resurgence in popularity and can be enhanced with trim ranging from rustic iron to polished nickel. Naturally, the care and maintenance of fabric in a kitchen must also be considered. In [kitchen design](#)

, we are seeing delicate wood shades as a current trend. From the purest traditional to ultra modern to the truly whimsical, there are vast choices available at every price point. You will also want to take into consideration the layout of your kitchen. Does it open to a dining or living area? If so you may want to consider continuity in your lighting. Define your needs, research your choices, and choose your lighting to create a kitchen

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dining or living area? If so you may want to consider continuity in your lighting. Define your needs, research your choices, and choose your lighting to create a kitchen you will enjoy for years to come.

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