

# This Old House

**EASY**  
KITCHEN  
MAKEOVERS  
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## MUST-HAVE #5 CEMENT-TILE BACKSPLASH

Designed to create colorful all-over patterns, these matte-finish tiles deliver a major style punch.

### BE SURE TO KEEP IN MIND...

- > **Weight:** They are heavier than their ceramic cousins. A typical 8-by-8-inch tile is 5/8 inch thick and weighs 3 pounds.
- > **Surface:** Because cement is not fired, it's porous. Applying a specialized sealant before and after installation protects the face from grout and olive-oil stains.
- > **Shipping:** Cement tiles are usually handmade, so colors and dimensions can vary. Ordering online? Consider buying 15 percent extra, since tiles can chip during shipping. The bottom line: It'll run about \$1,000 to \$1,500 to buy and ship tile for a 40- to 50-square-foot backsplash.
- > **Installation:** This job is best done by a pro. But if you want to DIY, check the

height of your cabinets or shelves, as you may be able to map out the tile to avoid having to trim (except along sides and around outlets). Measure out from the center, allowing for 1/8-inch grout lines. Any holes in the tile should be drilled at least 1 inch from an edge. Finish exposed edges at the end of a run with solid-color tile or wood trim. Match the tile color as the wall. The backsplash costs down by tiling the wall above the stove or doing a solid-color tile or wood trim.

> **Alternatives:** Ceramic and porcelain look-alikes now offer consistent color and no need to seal, and are DIY-friendly. We like Porcelanosa's Antique collection, \$13 per square foot.



### THE LOOK FOR LESS

For a big impact with no commitment, try peel-and-stick wallpaper in colorful, tile-like patterns. With DIY installation, it's about \$5 per

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