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kitchens & baths



What's Cooking In the Kitchen

Tomorrow's kitchens will fuse sleek looks with the warmth of wood and the appeal of color—and plenty of state-of-the-art amenities.

By Dana Asher • Photograph by Alec Marshall





If ever there's a space that can prove you're ahead of the curve, it's the kitchen. Products, materials, and state-of-the-art appliances come on the market at the speed of light; blink twice and your matched set of cabinets are as dated as the pop-up toaster. And where better to invest your design dollars? Today's kitchens are command central, where families not only meet, greet, and eat, but where they do research at computerized workstations and enjoy flat-screen TVs and high-tech sound systems. An Electrolux survey found that, besides cooking, nine out of 10 Americans engage in some sort of "non-kitchen" activity in their kitchens, such as paying bills, doing homework, and practicing musical instruments. More than two-thirds said they use their kitchens, rather than their living or family rooms, to socialize and entertain guests.

"Residential architects report that kitchens are becoming more integrated into living areas of the home and that they are generally making them more accessible to other areas in the home," says American Institute of Architects (AIA) Chief Economist Kermit Baker.

sizing up today's kitchens

ARCHITECTS REPORT THAT THE SIZE AND number of kitchens are increasing in American homes; one kitchen, it seems, just won't do. Kitchen functions are spreading throughout the house, with, according to an AIA Home Design Trends Survey, extra sinks found in rec rooms and butler's pantries, and mini fridges in bedrooms and walk-in closets. And outdoor kitchens, too, have grown—now replete with refrigerators, grills, and wine coolers.

"A great number of homeowners are expanding their kitchens," says Sam Owen, owner of Garth Custom Kitchens in Scarsdale. "There's a lot to accommodate today: a pair of dishwashers, different work stations, two to three sinks, even double islands. You've got to make space for it all."

With larger spaces comes the opportunity to introduce more colors. Both cabinets and appliances are being manufactured in a variety of shades. (Who would have guessed that you could purchase a refrigerator in mint green or a range in fire-engine red?) While for the past few years big and bold colors have made their way

into our kitchens, tomorrow's kitchen, experts predict, will incorporate earthy colors: deep tans, spice reds, and forest greens.

Look for brown—all shades from earth tones to dark chocolate—to invade the kitchen. Aga recently introduced one of its signature cookers in a deep, lush brown.

countertop chic

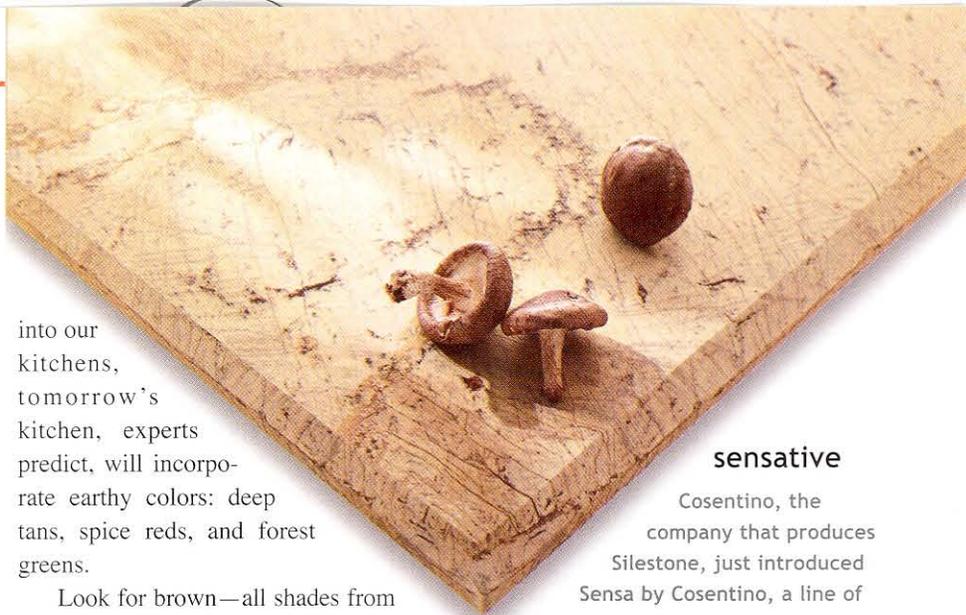
REMEMBER WHEN YOU HAD TO CHOOSE between Formica and, well, Formica? Today's range of countertop options is vast; there's stone, Corian, zinc, brass, copper, stainless steel, glass, tile, and even recycled paper. "People are not necessarily sticking with safe stone, such as polished granite," says Mel Elion, design consultant for Bilotta Kitchens in Mamaroneck. "They often go with a matte limestone or a soapstone or one of the new quartz materials available."

And, as a result of better sealants, wood countertops are no longer out of the question. "Teaks and cherry are becoming popular," Owen reports. "Marine finishes allow homeowners to include an undermount sink without worrying about ruining the wood."

Concrete surfaces, too, are making their way into the kitchen—though there are reports that it can be fragile and susceptible to burns and stains. Stainless steel continues to gain in popularity, but beware: it can show wear and tear, scratches, and fingerprints. Relatively low-priced quartz countertops have the advantage of being durable and resistant to stains, scratches, and very high temperatures, and come in a range of colors.

cutting-edge cabinets

EVEN IN CONSERVATIVE WESTCHESTER, homeowners are moving toward more modern cabinet designs with simpler styles and sleeker forms. And these designs aren't turning up just in contemporary homes.



sensative

Cosentino, the company that produces Silestone, just introduced Sensa by Cosentino, a line of natural stone with a finish that's achieved by brushing. Available at EXPO Design Center in New Rochelle.

"There's a lot to accommodate today: a pair of dishwashers, different work stations, two to three sinks, even double islands. You've got to make space for it all."

(previous spread)

hot chocolate

Jeff Eakley, a senior designer at Bilotta Kitchens in Mamaroneck, created this up-to-the-minute kitchen using sleek Artcraft cabinetry of white oak with a balsamic stain, CaesarStone's "Blizzard" countertops, and dark oak floors. Owners Amy and Brad Frishberg of Scarsdale added extra visual interest with Bisazza's "Nefertiti" mosaic glass tiles. Conveying a contemporary look without seeming cold or industrial are the sleek stainless-steel Sub-Zero refrigerator; a Best hood; a Wolf range, oven, and microwave; and stainless toe kicks and pulls.

"Traditional design in our area has been especially popular because our housing stock tends to be more traditional," Elion says. "But people want a change. Even the Clive Christian line is more streamlined in its overall look. Its details are less floral and more geometric."

Besides, thanks to larger homes that allow for several kitchens, consumers have more confidence in experimenting with design. "If there's a second kitchen, that's where people might consider a contemporary look," says Leona Hess, a certified master kitchen and bath designer at EXPO Design Center in New Rochelle and president of the Westchester Chapter of the National Kitchen and Bath Association (NKBA).

Owen sees homeowners experimenting with a variety of woods. Sleek, contemporary designs lend themselves to dark woods such as wenge, walnut, and stained teak, although bamboo and sycamore, which are lighter in shade, are also popular.

A consistent cabinet style and color throughout the kitchen is so yesterday. A mix-and-match medley of woods and material, many say, provide more visual interest. It's not unusual to find cream-colored glazed cabinets with a cherry wood island, or copper counter-topped islands with granite counter-topped kitchens. "People are mixing exotic woods with opaque lacquer woods in colors such as pale blue and green," Elion says.

Another trend: forgoing cabinet doors altogether in favor of open shelving, especially in rustic or country-style kitchens.

the appliance advantage

WHY JUST ONE REFRIGERATOR WHEN YOUR kitchen has room for two? And why just one sink? One oven? It's all about convenience: two sinks make prep and cleanup easier, a refrigerator can hold the day-to-day essentials with a smaller version in the butler's pantry serving as a beverage cooler, and two ovens may include both a traditional model and a convection version.

Whether they're stainless steel, robin's egg blue, or basic black, appliances have undergone some serious advances. Here are a few sure to be making their way into a kitchen near you:

➤ **Drawers Instead of Doors.** Clutter-free countertops are a breeze with the advent of refrigerator, microwave, warming, and dishwasher drawers that pull out just like those for pots and pans. Sharp Electronics' Insight Pro Microwave Drawer (\$799) fits into standard-size cabinetry or into the side of an island, allowing builders and kitchen designers to incorporate a microwave drawer into almost any design layout. Refrigerator and freezer drawers, such as Sub-Zero's 700BC/BCI, make it possible to have cold food storage in almost any room, such as entertainment centers or master suites. Says Owen:



ready,
aim,
drawer

Why *not* a fridge in your entertainment center, master suite, or walk-in closet? Sub-Zero's 700BC/BCI refrigerator/freezer drawers (starting at \$3,050) mean you can keep a snack cool just about anywhere, monitoring the temperature via a control panel in the top drawer. Stainless-steel panels and handles come in three designer finishes: classic, platinum, and carbon. Available at Leiberts Royal Green Appliances in White Plains, Village Appliance in Port Chester, Berger Appliances in Hawthorne, Atlantic Appliance in Mount Kisco, and Albano Appliance in Pound Ridge.

brownie points

Aga recently introduced chocolate to its wide range of cast-iron cooker colors (the three-oven cooker shown here, \$10,950). "Chocolate can be paired with vibrant hues for chic appeal," says Andrea M. Greene, vice president of marketing and operations for Aga Ranges, Inc. Available at Domain Home Fashions in Hartsdale.





love, love me brew

The Experience Coffee Center by Ariston has a stainless control pad and drop-down front door that makes whipping up espresso, cappuccino, latte (and, of course, coffee) easy, even if you haven't yet fully opened your eyes. It's also skinny—less than 12 inches deep—so the coffee system can be installed just about anywhere (\$2,499 to \$2,699). Available at Albano Appliances in Pound Ridge.

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(Clockwise from top right)

Rachel Ray orange oval casserole, available at Chef Central in Hartsdale; Manor cabinet door in bird's-eye maple with natural matte finish from Artcraft, available at Bilotta Kitchens in Mamaroneck, Mount Kisco, Briarcliff Manor, and New York City; aluminum frosted-glass door from Artcraft, available at Bilotta Kitchens; Wolfgang's White Mixed-Glass Stilato wall tile, available at Artistic Tile in White Plains; CaesarStone quartz counter surface in Tequila Sunrise, Apple Martini, Oyster, and Absolute Noir, available at Bilotta Kitchens; textured stainless-steel wall tile, available at MyHome in Mount Kisco; Rainforest Green marble, available at Eurostyle Marble & Granite in Ossining.

“People who keep a kosher home can accommodate two dishwashing drawers easier than two separate, full-size dishwashers.”

► **Remote-Control Ovens.** Nothing like opening your doors to the aroma of a home-cooked meal. With “intelligent ovens” like TMIO ConnectIo Intelligent Oven (\$7,495), food is placed in the refrigerated 30-inch, stainless-steel double wall ovens, which can be turned on to cook via cellphone or with a few keystrokes of the computer. Dacor’s colored glass oven (\$3,381 to \$5,599) isn’t just on homeowners’ wish lists because it comes in six colors: it keeps a file of stored digital recipes at the ready.

► **Built-in Coffee Makers.** “It’s the new status symbol,” Elion decalres. “Miele had developed built-in systems ten years ago, and now everybody seems to be coming out with them. But they’re pricey, going for about \$2,500.”

► **That’s Entertainment.** Not all high-tech appliances in the kitchen are for cooking, cooling, or cleaning. High-definition TVs, many with screens that fold under top cabinets, are big news. Computer stations with Internet access are transforming the kitchen into a family living center, allowing mom to keep a watchful eye over cyber-surfing kids.

What’s it all look like? While kitchen fashion come and go, stainless steel as the finish of choice seems to be a mainstay. Not only are appliances offered in the commercial-style material, but countertops, backsplashes, and even cabinets are as well. Prized for its versatility and durability, stainless steel is also environmentally friendly: the U.S. Green Building Council confirms that it is recyclable and doesn’t produce pollutants.

finishing touches

WE ALL KNOW THAT DETAILS MATTER—A

lot. Lighting fixtures are one detail that should not be overlooked. While the array of styles for kitchen lighting available is vast, hanging fixtures, especially rows of them, are used in conjunction with recessed lighting because of their high style. And more and more chandeliers are moving out of the dining room and into the kitchen.

Cravings in the Kitchen

What do today’s homeowners hunger for in their kitchens? Architects report that these products and features are increasingly finding their way onto wish lists:

| | increase in popularity |
|----------------------------------|------------------------|
| • Larger pantry space: | 56% |
| • High-end appliances: | 55% |
| • Integration with family space: | 53% |
| • Natural stone counters: | 53% |
| • Island work areas: | 35% |
| • Natural wood cabinets: | 32% |

Source: The American Institute of Architects (AIA) Home Design Trends Survey

“Any kind of renovation should include fluorescent lighting—it’s time-saving and economical,” advises the NKBA’s Hess. She points to California’s energy-efficiency standards requiring that at least 50 percent of a kitchen’s installed wattage be from fluorescent, Compact Fluorescent (CFL) or High-Density Discharge (HID) lights, predicting that this will eventually become law in New York State. For those who remember the blinding lights of yesteryear, Hess is reassuring: “This isn’t your parents’ old fluorescent lighting. It’s much softer.”

And let’s not forget your backsplash. While backsplashes of stone such as tumbled marble and ceramic tile of all sorts still hold court in most homes, a variety of new choices have cropped up for the taking. Many (stainless steel, for example) coordinate with the assortment of countertop materials. Other materials, such as glass and metal tiles, are gaining in popularity, but are more often used as accent pieces to the traditional stone or ceramic tile. And creating mosaic patterns behind ranges still holds strong. More than ever, design touches serve to enhance the personality of the kitchen.

“In traditional kitchens, I’ve seen patterned tin or waffle-stamped stainless steel, like you’d find in diners,” Owen reports. “I’ve even done a backsplash of wainscoting that uses mirror rather than raised panels.”

In today’s kitchen, nothing is overlooked, from the floor (with a variety of woods and stone still the most popular) to the ceiling. “I’m doing a lot of tin ceilings,” Owen says. “It has a very dramatic effect, particularly if the kitchen has a high ceiling.” **H&G**