

TODAY'S Kitchens

photos and text excerpted from *Her Home* magazine

Hickory offers a variety of grain patterns that give each cabinet its own distinct characteristics. (Sutton Cliffs Square cabinetry from Merillat Classic™, shown in Natural Finish)

photo courtesy of www.Merillat.com

www.HerHome.com

“Open floor plans continue to affect kitchen design in multiple ways,” observes Linda Reimer, *Her Home* publisher and president of Design Basics Inc., one of the largest home plan design companies in the nation. “Because the great room and kitchen are often linked by an island or peninsula, we’re seeing fewer upper cabinets. This results in a demand for larger pantries and maximizing the use of the base cabinets.”

FEWER UPPER CABINETS

Patricia Nunan, CKBR, CKD, CAPS, a certified kitchen and bath designer with Lifestyles Design Inc. in Perkiomenville, Pennsylvania, agrees. “The number of upper cabinets is definitely decreasing; people prefer more windows and bigger refrigerators and pantries. Plus, homeowners don’t want to reach up to get things out of cupboards.”



LEFT TO RIGHT:
KraftMaid's interior cabinet lighting illuminates a Lazy Susan.

This specialized drawer doubles as storage and a convenient shelf when microwaving.

From KraftMaid's New Harmony Storage Solutions, the base cookware rollout eliminates the towering stack of pots.

This deep drawer configuration offers a combination of deep and shallow storage for maximum efficiency.

photos courtesy of
www.KraftMaid.com

STREAMLINED, & Efficient & Stylish



"On the high end, there's been an increase in prep pantries," notes Moen Kitchen and Bath Expert Stephanie Young. "In addition to dry goods, they may house an ice machine and a wine refrigerator, a small auxiliary refrigerator or a second dishwasher."

"They can also include a microwave, sink and prep area – to keep the main kitchen tidier," adds Reimer.

"With base cabinets doing extra duty, what's inside the cabinets has become as important as how they look on the outside," continues Nunan. "People are looking for ways to add more convenience and organization, whether it's a pop-up shelf for a mixer, a corner cabinet with a pullout – instead of a lazy Susan – or slide outs that let you put drinking glasses in base cabinets.

"In the past, the only choices available to homeowners were to install new cabinets that came with the different inserts or have the units custom made for older cabinets. Now, companies like Rev-a-Shelf® provide an extensive line of specialized storage options through Lowes® and Home Depot® that can easily be added to existing cabinetry. Another company that offers inserts (that's

not as widely known) is Häfele, which originated in Europe.

"And, of course, drawers are very popular because they bring items to us, eliminating the need to reach into a dark cabinet to retrieve items stacked on shelves."

"Because there are fewer upper cabinets and most new homes have at least nine- or ten-foot ceilings, the remaining uppers are commonly 42 inches high," Reimer notes. "Glass doors are used to break up the wood surfaces and add interest. While some homeowners choose clear glass to display collectibles, textured glass is more common because it adds light and interest while shielding the view of the cabinets' interiors."

Traci Kloos, senior designer for KraftMaid Cabinetry, says the manufacturer now offers a wide variety of patterned, colored and textured glass door inserts. "We've even started layering different items, such as screen and woven reed, in between two pieces of glass. We also have an icy frost pattern and a popular pearlescent glass that shimmers, providing a little glitz and glamour. This year, we'll be offering some new fun, colored glass options.

"Another way to make storage more convenient is to add inside cabinet lighting. We recently launched a lighting campaign that allows homeowners to light up a drawer cabinet or a lazy Susan with xenon lights that have their own transformers – so they can be installed easily with no extra wiring necessary.

"Our lighting program also includes special grooved molding on the bottom of upper cabinets that readily accepts a fluorescent linkable light. So under cabinet lighting no longer has to be recessed; it snaps right into the molding on the bottom of the cabinets."

CABINETRY COLORS AND STYLES

Improved lighting has brought darker cherry and mahogany cabinets back into popularity, according to Les Petrie, former president of the National Kitchen and Bath Association and owner of Mother Hubbard's Custom Cabinetry in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania.

"In the past, those stains could really darken the room, but with today's layered lighting techniques, that's less likely. However, it's important not to use more general illumination than task illumination. I recommend countertops be 10 - 15% brighter than the rest



ABOVE: Shoji screens are used as room dividers and doors.

photo courtesy of
www.CherryTreeDesign.com

TOP: This sophisticated kitchen combines rich finishes with sleek lines. (Melrose cabinetry in Peppercorn and Toffee, from KraftMaid)

OPPOSITE: Graphite is gaining popularity as shown in KraftMaid's Tivoli cabinetry in Graphite Gloss.

photos courtesy of
www.KraftMaid.com

of the room – or you can wind up with shadows on the countertops. Dimmer switches can help alleviate this problem.

“In addition to good lighting, reflective surfaces can keep a kitchen lighter – whether it’s a cabinet finish with sheen or reflective materials on the back walls or countertops.”

Petrie reports the Fusion element is gaining momentum across the country. “Fusion combines clean, simple Asian lines with American charm – warm wood tones and Shaker or Craftsman details. One of the newer developments in this movement is Shoji screens – Japanese-style sliding doors that are showing up on pantry doors in the kitchen, as well as closet doors and room dividers in the rest of the home. Two of the companies I’ve worked with are www.CherryTreeDesign.com and www.OrientalFurniture.com.” Aura Home Design also offers sliding, designer doors in contemporary, cottage and country styles through Home Depot.

“I’d say 65% of the country is still doing pretty traditional kitchens,” says Young. “But whether the décor is traditional, contemporary or even Tuscan, the overall look of cabinetry is simpler and more streamlined. In the South, one of the hottest looks is a light maple with a mocha glaze. It has warmth and depth, while still maintaining that light look. I’m also still seeing a lot of dark and light finish mixtures and light painted cabinets with a darker glaze.”

“Modern influences are affecting all facets of design from country cottage to traditional,” echoes Kloos. “In response to this trend, KraftMaid recently launched Venicia™, an extensive line of Euro-style, open-frame cabinetry with a modern, urban appeal. The line features horizontal wood grains, asymmetrical elements and glass focal points. In addition to convenient pullouts, the Venicia line also offers a top hinge cabinet (the door swings upward) and a wall lateral bifold that looks like two doors stacked on top of each other that lift up – rather than to the side.

“I’d say cherry and maple are still the top wood choices, but more open grains are coming in. We recently launched Melrose, a quarter sawn oak door that we showcased in a deep, rich, very dark brown hue called Peppercorn. Painted cabinets are more neutral than in the past, where we saw a range of colors, and there is less distressing and sand through. Gray is becoming more influential, but it’s a deeper, warmer gray. So we’re offering a new finished called Graphite.

“Designers are not only mixing different colors and tones, but textures as well. For instance, they may pair wood cabinetry with a high gloss thermafoil. Exotic woods are still popular as well. We have a new cabinet named Tygris that looks like a zebra stripe that we mix with a high gloss onyx thermafoil. So you have that textural pattern with a high gloss black; it’s a very sophisticated, metropolitan look.”

“People want their kitchen to be different from everyone else’s,” Petrie observes, “and one way they’re doing that is with unique or even custom hardware. The Knobbery (www.TheKnobbery.com) has thousands of cabinet knobs and pulls, from traditional to contemporary and quirky to one of a kind.”

Using computer-aided modeling and wax casting, SA Baxter allows designers to walk into a showroom with an idea, walk out with a 3-D model and get the finished products days later. They also have an artisan series of fixtures produced in limited quantities.

MORE CHOICES IN COUNTERTOPS

Granite continues in first place, but it’s no longer restricted to basic brown, rose or black. Juperanas with more interesting grains have come into vogue. They can be pricey, but they show fewer drips and fingerprints than black granite.

A new, rippled, unpolished edge is being used on one end of granite-topped islands to add interest and give the appearance of a natural break.

Because granite is becoming more and more common, some homeowners are turning to Rich-lite®, a natural wood fiber composite laminate. Used in commercial kitchens since the 1960s, it is made up of compressed layers of paper that are treated with resin and then baked to form solid sheets.

Slate and soapstone are also seeing more use. Because it’s nonporous, slate doesn’t stain and doesn’t need to be sealed. However, it is softer than granite and may chip or crack if something heavy is dropped on it. Soapstone is low maintenance and withstands heat and spills. Its texture feels somewhat chalky and it will darken over time.

Stainless steel is being used in contemporary kitchens. It doesn’t stain and is easy to clean, but it can be noisy and scratches easily.

“Silestone® has a few new products that are very attractive,” notes Young. “Silestone Leather™ has a honed, matt surface that’s rather luxurious and their River Series has the same texture, along with non-directional veining that helps it look more like natural stone. And, of course, they both have Microban so they’re very hygienic.”

“Cambria has three new colors that are very rich,” says Nunan. “Dover™ looks like beige concrete; Sussex™ looks like brown concrete and Hyde Park™ is a mixture of greens and beiges.”



The distinctive look of a Juperana granite.



Custom cabinet knob designed by SA Baxter. View their entire collection at www.SABaxter.com.
photo courtesy of SA Baxter



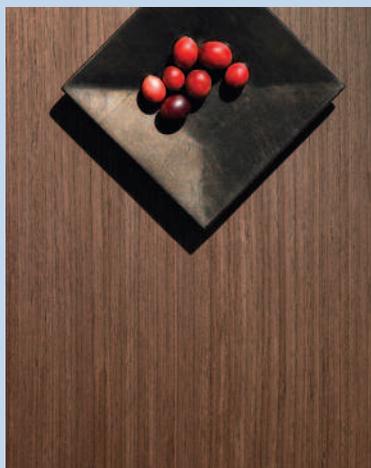
Elkay's Mystic Sink is a stylish prep sink that can double as an ice cooler for parties.

photo by Raymond Andreski



Mocha Striawood countertop from Formica's new Veneer Premium Wood Surfacing.

photo courtesy of www.Formica.com



The same toaster before and after Thomas' Liquid Stainless Steel was applied.

photo courtesy of Liquid Stainless Steel



"Those with more conservative budgets still find ceramic tile appealing, along with 12 x 12 granite tiles," Petrie comments. "Granite tiles are considerably less expensive than a whole countertop created out of a slab and if they're installed with a thin grout line, they look similar."

Formica® introduced Veneer Premium Wood Surfacing in 2006. Available in 30 engineered-wood veneers, the surfacing adds warmth to light-duty horizontal surfaces, as well as vertical surfaces. The look of water-smoothed concrete, aggregate and burnished metals are represented in Formica's new Riverwash™ High Pressure Laminate Finish Collection.

By incorporating a dappled texture and a matte/gloss differential, Wilsonart® HD (high definition) Laminate provides depth and an interesting play of light and shadow. According to Wilsonart, it also boasts a wear resistance three times the industry standard.

SINKS AND FAUCETS

Expanded choices is also the theme for kitchen sinks. Primary sinks may be one, large single bowl (which readily accommodates large pots and cookie sheets), double bowls with equal halves or one larger half, or triple bowls (with a small bowl for the garbage disposal).

Farmhouse sinks in a wide variety of materials from copper to natural stone are popular. Kohler® has come out with cast iron sinks in a variety of colors including blacks, grays and beiges that complement granite countertops.

In addition to primary sinks, many kitchens offer a prep sink and/or an entertaining sink. Elkay®'s Mystic Sink is a perfect example. Loaded with ice and appetizers, it provides a dazzling way to serve guests.

Moen's Lancelot sinks are available in square, oval, round, and trapezoid shapes; consumers can create their own kitchen look in unique double- and triple-bowl under-mount configurations.

"Antique pewter is coming into play in faucet finishes," notes Young, "with more of a gray than a brown tone. And brushed or distressed brass faucets are catching on, as seen in Moen's Showhouse line. Brushed nickel continues to be in the lead, but oil rubbed bronze faucets won't go away anytime soon."

APPLIANCES

Stainless appliances have saturated the market from the high to the low end. "To provide a different look, some builders are mixing black and stainless appliances," Young comments.

Advertised as the world's first brush on stainless steel, Thomas' Liquid Stainless Steel allows homeowners to transform old appliances to stainless...as well as toasters, trash cans and blenders.

In the meantime, "everyone is waiting to see what the next big thing will be," says Kloos. "Jenn Air is launching a new oil rubbed bronze line for sale this year after the Kitchen and Bath Show. Dacor has a warm, champagne color they'll be debuting, too. And, Sub-Zero has a deeper gray, graphite

color." Perlick Corporation offers color-infused stainless steel under counter refrigerated cabinets in Amethyst and Copper.

"Ninety percent of my clients ask for a refrigerator with French doors and the freezer below. They're easier to get items in and out and the doors don't need as much room," reports Nunan.

"Although they started out on the high end, I'm seeing more induction cooktops," notes Young. "They are around 70% more energy efficient than a gas cooktop and safer."

"They're also a great universal feature," adds Nunan. "Because they're smooth, users can slide a pot to the countertop. And you can lock out children or people with dementia from using them."

"GE Profile™ and Monogram® ovens have Trivection® Technology; this means the homeowner can choose microwave, conventional or convection options. So you have the best of all worlds."

"Homeowners are demanding more from their kitchens than ever before," Reimer concludes. "They want them to function ideally for food preparation as well as entertaining. Whatever the size, a kitchen must feel bright and spacious. This is achieved with ample windows, good lighting and an open design. Finally, busy lifestyles have placed a greater emphasis on simple, restful elements and excellent organization." ■