

STYLE BOARD

KITCHEN & BATH



ANY WAY YOU WANT IT

From remodels to complete renovations, homeowners are prioritizing kitchen and bath.

BY GIANNA ANNUNZIO

As we venture further into 2024, the world of interior design is witnessing a shift in kitchen and bathroom aesthetics. Long established as the “heart of the home,” Americans are increasingly prioritizing their kitchens. According to a recent survey from Bertazzoni, three out of four homeowners (75 percent) say they use the kitchen more than any other room in their home. Now, despite forecasts for a cooling housing market, state-of-the-art, large kitchens are in high demand. Whether looking for a refresh, a complete renovation or a new house — homeowners will likely prioritize investing in kitchen and bath.

Since kitchens and baths sell homes, investing in these areas is almost never at a loss to the homeowner. Staci Steidley, Design Principal of Studio Steidley Interior Design, is seeing trends that are changing the way clients think about both traditional, and modern kitchens and baths. Materials like bold and opinionated natural stones are used in abundance, and stained cabinets — both light and dark — are also on trend.

“We still see clients wanting white oak with a clear coat that keeps it light and bright,” she says. “But in the last year, we have had many clients asking for walnut with a medium stain or even a dark stain. I think the clean rift cut on oak is still strong.”

Homeowners continue to break out of the cookie-cutter mold and venture into more expressive designs through colorful cabinetry, bold surfacing and appliances that provide a more personalized aesthetic, according to Bertazzoni. Perfectly imperfect finishes layered with a variety of textures are also popular.

“A few years ago, everyone wanted kitchens and baths to be stark white and brass,” Steidley says. “Now we see homeowners asking for unlacquered brass, knowing that as they use it, it will age and show wear — and they are excited for this process!”

One size certainly does not fit all — only 19 percent of Americans find all white kitchens appealing, according to Bertazzoni. Wendy Glaister, founder of Wendy Glaister Interiors, in Modesto, CA, agrees; she sees

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Personalization of a space has proven important, according to Steidley (above). A yearning for security and coziness has also been of increased interest, especially during the uncertain times following the pandemic, says Glaister (right).

movement “far far away” from gray and sterility. Color and warm texture is more prominent than ever before.

“I think people want to feel safe in their homes, and not as though they have to keep everything perfect,” she says. “A warm, natural color scheme is more effective.” Steidley also sees backsplashes with a top ledge, where homeowners can display small treasures. Small lamps used to style both kitchens and baths are also placed on counters.

“This all adds to the aura of a space feeling ‘lived in,’ or having a bit of history to it,” she says. In terms of color palettes, Earth tones and muted jewel tones are gaining attention.

“Rather than just seeing one shade of green in the kitchen and bath, you will see several shades layered in beautiful ways,” Steidley says. “You will see more and more deep reds, and even shades of lavender used.” Along with these palettes, Steidley is seeing a larger push toward unexpected color combinations.

“People want to step out of the box of rules, and we are seeing this fun trend in the newer tiles, fabrics and textures on the market.” she says. Bathroom lighting is also shifting toward a more sculptural aesthetic.

“In our designs, we are using more hidden light sources for a softer look, using under cabinet lighting for tasks and statement island or over the sink light fixtures for that ‘wow’ moment,” Glaister says. “In bath, I see a strong interest in wellness. The ASID Trends report mentions that as well. Steam showers, bidet toilets, heated floors...and all mostly automated. You can operate it all from your smartphone.”

Circadian tuning is also gaining traction as the focus in the industry shifts more toward wellness lighting within the home.

“At Lightovation in Dallas, I spent some time at Pure Edge learning about how the lighting installed in your spaces can be ‘tuned’ to the time of day,” Glaister says. “This means that in the morning, things are bright and the color temperature is wakeful. In the evening, the lighting dims and the color temperature warms. That’s really great for our emphasis on wellness.”

IT'S PERSONAL

Personalization of the space has also proven important, rather than seeing a series of copycat designs. A yearning for security and coziness has also been of increased interest, especially during the uncertain times following the pandemic.

“Gone are the days where everyone wanted their space to look just like what they saw Joanna do in Fixer Upper,” Steidley says. “Now, each person wants to have a space that reflects who they are, with a bit of the unexpected to make it unique. This really allows designers to shine and be super creative.”

“As designers, all we do is customize,” says Glaister. “We want to understand the client, their daily life, their ambitions and goals, how they want their home to work to further their health and lifestyle.”

If Glaister learns a client has a stressful job and trouble sleeping, for example, she often will recommend comforts such as a steam shower and tuned lighting.

“If the client has children at home and frequently entertains, we make sure there’s a refreshment zone somewhere

near their kitchen,” she says. “Drawer storage and organization, closet organization, a layout that supports their morning routines, etc. It is all designed purposefully into our remodel or from blueprint projects.”

Customers also recognize that designers can plan for the specifics within a home extremely precisely. Customized cabinetry is requested by nearly every client nowadays.

“We even had one client take our design and pretend to cook with the proposed layout,” Steidley exclaims. “We switched two appliances because of this. We had another client who wanted us to incorporate a hidden coffee bar and beverage fridge in their bathroom cabinetry and it felt so luxurious, yet took no more room — only a bit more planning.”

Personalization is also extending into appliance colors and designs. Less than a quarter of U.S. homeowners (23 percent) say that contrasting colors or finishes, like blue lower cabinets and white upper cabinets, are of interest — making this once-buzzy trend officially on its way out. Instead, designers and homeowners can create contrast through eye-catching appliances, which can serve as the focal point of the kitchen without overwhelming the space.

“We see so many people willing to invest in a luxury range that is a fun color like blue, green or even yellow,” Steidley says. “Homeowners are feeling brave and they know that this is a game changer in the way a whole



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space feels and can be the first selection they make in the kitchen design.” Within lighting, cabinet hardware and plumbing, designers are seeing a resurgence of polished nickel.

“Once again, taking a cue from fashion, but also harkening back to historic elements,” Steidley says. “We will continue to see a mix of metals in most spaces. The matchy-matchy look is gone and now spaces should feel curated with depth and variety in all arenas of interior design.”

As sustainability has become a growing concern in the design community, customers are also ready to take action. In the past, designers would propose an item that was made using sustainable materials and methods, though they often came with a large price tag. Now, sustainable items are much more affordable.

“They can be sourced at a much lower cost,” Steidley says. “And if they aren’t, we see clients making the investment happily. People also don’t want to continue to spend money on disposable furnishings. They would rather invest in a quality piece.” Antiques have also helped the sustainability movement unfold more naturally, as clients have become more excited over incorporating them into interiors.

“A few years ago, no clients asked for us to source antiques for them,” she says. “Now they are excited about this idea.”

“Back kitchens” or “prep kitchens” are one of the hottest new premium trends. According to the survey, many homeowners aspire to have a second kitchen, perhaps to create a separate, discrete space for food prep. Offering the best of both worlds, homes with back kitchens allow an open, “front of house” entertaining space with an adjacent space to keep food prep and used dishware out of sight. For high-end homes, back kitchens create space for Instagram-worthy entertaining.

“I see more separation being built in,” Glaister says. “For example, the resurrection of the water closet and his-and-hers separate vanities in bathrooms. People want their own, defined spaces.”

Designers will continue to see a mix of metals in most spaces. The “matchy-matchy” look is long gone, according to Steidley.

In the kitchen, Glaister now creates “zones” that provide a place for the home chef. A “hot zone” where cooking and a main sink are located, a “prep zone” for washing and prepping veggies or decorating cookies — even a “baking zone” which usually contains customized storage for dry goods, and an appliance lift for a large mixer and food processor.

“Then there’s the ‘entertaining zone’ with a small sink, a beverage refrigerator and some stemware and drinking glasses,” she says. “Guests and family can pop in, grab a drink and a snack and not have to navigate through the madness of dinner prep happening across the room.” Smart technology for the home is also rapidly evolving. Both Glaister and Steidley believe they will continue to evolve and learn, adapt and grow to promote the health and wellness of our clients to the best of our ability.

“It will be exciting to see all the ways that it will be implemented,” Steidley says. “I think we will see more appliances that you operate with your phones, AI being used to create recipes from what it can see you have in your pantry and fridge, and even sensors that turn off water if it sees a leak somewhere. Not only does this save everyone time, it also will prevent major incidents saving clients a lot of money in the long run.”

There may also be a move toward “fancy” features that are not as common, according to Glaister.

“Built-in espresso machines that work from your phone so your coffee is ready when you arrive in the kitchen and a new level in water dispensing: boiling, cold and sparkling filtered water,” she says. “I have used the Zip Water in two kitchens just last year.”

“This design life is very special that way,” says Glaister. “You can transform someone’s life by creating a space that will support them.” **FLD**