

What's Hot in Kitchen and Bath Design

Designers at annual kitchen and bath confab say contemporary, clean – and easy-to-clean – matter most

By Maggie Flynn | CTW Features

When clean, contemporary styles are edging out Tuscan country looks, and practical convenience and comfort in kitchen and bath designs are top priorities among homeowners, a new survey shows.

After years of holding purse strings tight, people are more willing to invest in their homes, according to 420 designers polled in the annual Design Trends Survey released by the National Kitchen and Bath Association at its 2014 KBIS event, a trade event that coincided with the International Builders Show in Las Vegas in early February.

"We've had a rough couple of years," says Maria Stapperfenne, a designer for 22 years and manager of Tewksbury Kitchens and Baths, a division of Huston Lumber & Supply Co. in North Plainfield, N.J. "People have needed to allocate their funds to other items."

Now, she and other designers see that changing.

"People are confident now in investing back in their home," says John Petrie, president of the National Kitchen and Bath Association. "From an economy standpoint, it's well on the rebound."

Among kitchen and bath trends on the rise for 2014, according to designers polled in the survey:

Cleaner, simple styling

Tuscan and provincial-style kitchens are on the way out in favor of contemporary styling, with its emphasis on straight lines and minimal accessories. Contemporary design has been popular for bathrooms for several years; 62 percent of designers in the survey expect it to become more prominent in kitchen design.

While granite has ruled for years as the popular choice for countertops, easy-care quartz, a manufactured product that is durable and more resistant to stains and spills, is an increasingly popular choice for kitchen counters and bathroom vanities. For cabinets in both rooms, homeowners are more frequently passing up elaborate molding and trims in favor of simplicity, designers said.

Red and bronze color schemes are on the decline. Designers agreed that gray will be the fastest growing color in 2014, according to the survey.

No more tangles

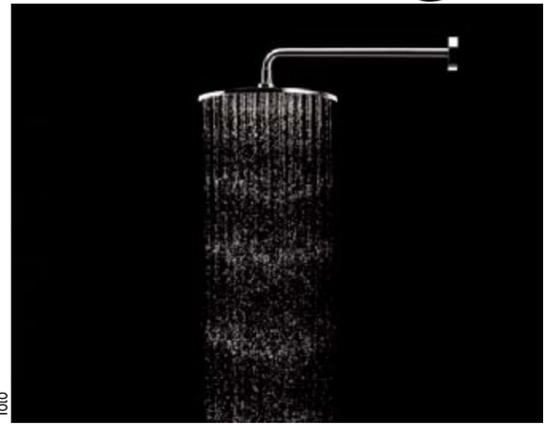
Interest in convenient kitchen charging stations for the typical household's flotilla of mobile devices continues to increase, designers said. New at the Kitchen and Bath Show: a "docking drawer" to



Kohler



Thermador



Toto



Diamond Cabinets



JTech Solutions

hide the tangle of cords and chargers.

The shallow drawer from JTech Solutions, of San Ramon, Calif., contains two grounded outlets and two USB outlets to recharge mobile devices, keeping counters clutter-free.

Stapperfenne favors power strips integrated into cabinets for device-charging. She often incorporates a message center into her kitchen designs, a "standup kind of a desk area where you can land your purse and briefcase and mail and have a place to charge the cell phone," she says.

Stephanie Pierce, design studio manager for MasterBrand Cabinets Inc., attributes the integration of technology to changing expectations.

"The kitchen is becoming the central workplace of the home," she says. "It's really becoming multifunctional and multi-use — it's not just where you're cooking anymore."

Comfort for all

Some 57 percent of designers said they specified accessible or universal designs

in the bath, and 56 percent did the same for the kitchen. These features are becoming more popular because they provide convenience to everyone, while ensuring safe access to the very young, the very old, and folks with mobility problems.

"The trend is: I want to be comfortable," Stapperfenne says. "It's a universal design for comfort's sake."

A long, narrow, decorative channel drain from Quick Drain USA, of Frisco, Colo., won plaudits as best bath product at the International Builders Show. The linear drains allow for a sleek, curbless shower.

Green a go-go

Water-saving kitchen and bath products abounded at the show.

"We as a society have taken water for granted significantly," says NKBA's Petrie, who acknowledged that water-conserving technology for toilets and faucets

Smart new products for kitchen and bath: clockwise from top right: Toto's water-sipping Aero showerhead; under-counter e-cookbook holder from Diamond; JTech Solutions' kitchen docking drawer for recharging mobile devices; easy-clean Thermador induction cooktop; Kohler's wall-hung Jute bathroom vanity, a play on mid-century modern design.

hasn't always lived up to the hype.

But Petrie sees hope for greener technologies among new products introduced at the show. A new high-efficiency toilet from Toto uses no more than one gallon per flush, and incorporates a self-cleaning system that uses UV light that activates when the lid is closed. Toto's new Aero Rain Shower showerhead injects air into water drops to increase their size and provide a sense of greater volume, using pulsing technology.

Technological innovation will drive more water-saving products, Petrie says. Products that "conserve water without giving up quality or style," is a trend that will grow," he says.

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Stage a Home - For Yourself

By Taniesha Robinson | CTW Features

Staging a home — instant interior makeovers intended to help increase a home's resale value — isn't rocket science. And, it's not just for homes that have "For Sale" signs in the front yard.

Just ask Emmy-nominated "Speed" home stager Jill Vegas, who uses the Internet and weekly action plans to help homeowners learn how to put their properties in the best light. Or interior designer C.J. Knapp, creative director and lead designer for Savvy Surrounding Style, a St. Louis home store and design firm.

Here are some tips you can use to instantly and cheaply transform your home - and not just for someone else to enjoy.

Clear the clutter

Strip the room of "anything that's

distracting from the architectural features in your home," says Vegas, author of "Speed Decorating" (The Taunton Press, 2009). In a kitchen, these distractions include extra appliances, cereal boxes and any out-of-place items like piles of mail.

"When it comes to staging a house, less is more," says Knapp. "A few well-placed pieces of furniture have more impact than lots of pieces." Vegas has a self-proclaimed "fierce" rule when it comes to getting rid of things: "Ask yourself, Do I love it? And listen to what pops into your head."

Clean, clean, clean

"Make sure every inch of your floor sparkles," Vegas says. Everything has to gleam, and those dust balls in the corner of your closet have to go.

Add mirrors

Mirrors instantly increase light and can

make a space feel wider or deeper. "Look for windows with great views to reflect in the mirror," Knapp says. "Before placing mirrors stand with your back to the wall and look straight ahead. If you see into the bathroom, a blank wall or a stack of dirty dishes in the sink you know not to place a mirror there."

Light your way

Natural light shining through sparkling windows makes a big statement in a staged home, so remove heavy curtains that block out natural light. "Turn on lights so your house seems warmer and brighter," Knapp says. Remove dusty shades and switch out light bulbs.

Join the color guard

Beware of too much or too little color. You don't want to overpower a room with one color or whitewash the place, either.



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Vegas recommends adding "color accents." Choose a palette for your throw pillows, vases, flowers, artwork and rugs.

Pull up a chair

"Place furniture on an angle," Knapp suggests. Add small stools in a dining space to suggest generous seating space. Avoid multiple chairs with backs that create a vertical line; this can make a space appear cramped and small.

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