

5 Household Items That Are Getting (Much) Smarter

With advances in technology, the ordinary is becoming extraordinary

By **MAGGIE FLYNN** | CTW Features

The 2014 Consumer Electronics Show brought the future to the present with buzzy gadgets like 3-D printers and technological marvels like automobile traffic-light assist.

However, some of the best devices featured upgrades to everyday items. Using mobile access and data sharing in unique ways, these updated household items are designed to make your life easier.



SMART SLOW COOKER ^^

With the smart slow cooker, you won't need to worry about burning dinner again. Belkin and Crock-Pot team up to produce a slow cooker that connects to Wi-Fi networks. With a smartphone and Belkin's We-Mo app, you can keep track of the food wherever you are.

After connecting the pot and downloading the app, turn the Crock-Pot on and off and change the temperature or timing as needed. You'll also get reminders about the cooking progress in case you're running late.

PRICE: \$99.99
AVAILABILITY: Spring 2014

NEST PROTECT

Smoke alarms have become a source of annoyance rather than reassurance, which can lead to disaster when the alarm is ignored. To lower the probability of that happening, Nest designed a smoke alarm to which people are more likely to respond.

Nest Protect uses a warning voice to let homeowners know if there's smoke or gas present. If the situation is a false alarm, a wave of the hand shuts the detector off, making it a godsend for anyone who's set off the alarm by microwaving the popcorn too long.

Nest Protect has been available since October but was prominently featured at CES 2014, and the company was recently purchased by Google for \$3.2 billion.

PRICE: \$129
AVAILABILITY: Available for order

SLEEP NUMBER BED

Sleep Number's x12 mattress uses "Sleep IQ" technology to gather data on your breathing rate, heart rate and motion - all while you sleep. The data is sent to the accompanying app via Bluetooth, allowing you to keep track of your sleep and adjust your bed accordingly.

The mattress also responds to simple voice commands to turn on features such as under-bed lighting or built-in massage.

Though the tech is limited to the x12 for now, Sleep Number plans on implementing Sleep IQ tech throughout their

product line by the end of the year.

PRICE: \$7,999+
AVAILABILITY: Select markets in February, nationwide in April

KOLIBREE SMART TOOTHBRUSH >>

The Kolibree Smart Toothbrush takes the guesswork out of dental care by working straight from your toothbrush. This device measures whether or not you've been brushing long enough and how thoroughly you've cleaned your teeth. The data is then delivered via Bluetooth to the accompanying app, allowing you to keep track of your stats and discuss them with your dentist as needed.

There's even a reward system to help track progress.

For families, there's also the option of syncing to several toothbrushes to keep everyone's teeth clean and healthy.

PRICES: \$99-200
AVAILABILITY: Fall 2014

LYNX CONCEPT GRILL >>

The Lynx Concept Grill is still only a prototype, but if you want to spend more time socializing at the family cookout, then it might be the perfect backyard touch when it becomes available.

After you tell the Smart Grill what's on the menu, it checks online for optimal food placement and cooking time. You can update recipes to suit your taste and get instructions as needed.

Should you get distracted by the pasta salad, the grill can send you notifications when the food is ready, and to avoid fire



hazards, it will turn itself off if thirty minutes go by without instructions.

PRICE: TBD
AVAILABILITY: Lynx hopes to have a production version available in 2015

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Master & Commander

Get 'territorial' and customize a master bathroom to fit the needs of both bathroom users

By **MICHAEL JULIANO** | CTW Features

Bathrooms for couples typically conjure up images of matching bathrobes and swimming pool-sized tubs overflowing with bubbles and bubbly. For today's busy couple, though, the bathroom has become a more complex space with two equally important, but opposite, goals - functionality and relaxation.

To make a bathroom as functional as possible, Dave Alderman, a certified master kitchen and bath designer and president at Dave's Cabinet Inc., has two key pieces of advice.

First, he recommends as much countertop space as possible, as well as two sinks. "If you have the space, it's better to have two distinct areas," he says, in order to help maintain "territorial space."

Moreover, Alderman has found that accommodating each person's height - usually by raising the countertop by two to three inches for males - can be useful for making bathroom rituals feel a little bit more natural.

Second, Alderman suggests that couples have a lot of storage space.

Simple bins and storage racks can be sufficient for keeping the room in order, but furniture with drawers and especially doors creates more space to stay organized and creates a more complete look.

Kate Flaherty, vice president of building products and special projects at the Chicago-based home renovation showroom LuxeHome, agrees that storage is key. "Build a linen closet or add storage units in the bathroom for easy access to linens and bathroom accessories," she suggests. "This will save time when getting ready in a hurry."

Of course, not everyone can afford the space and price tag needed for a large master bathroom, but good lighting or an



Extra storage space and easy access to different amenities/accessories are the keys to a harmonious shared bathroom situation.

intimate effect like hanging candles can help "take a smaller bathroom and make it more elegant looking," according to Alderman.

However, if you do have the space, a bathroom can become more than just a place to soak. Some couples opt for turning the bathroom into a complete living experience with the addition of big screen televisions, sound systems, refrigerators and sometimes an entire room attached with space for lounging, laundry or exercising.

When planning a shower, Flaherty says that it should be large enough for two people and designed with the needs of both in mind. "A toe rest or shelf in the shower is perfect for women when they're shaving," she says.

She adds, "The master bath should fit the needs of the couple who uses it."

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10.25" X 2.5"