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Mostly high-end gadgets, but some affordable

All 'manor' of things for kitchen and bath

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LAS VEGAS — Feet hurt at the end of the day? If you have the room and about \$14,000, Kohler offers the Pedicure Spa, which features a whirlpool footbath, a chaise longue, a technician's chair, and the necessary faucet and drain components.

Up to now, it's been a commercial product primarily, but it's likely the Pedicure Spa will find its way into the highest-end homes, to help high-end consumers live life to the fullest.

The full life is an expensive concept, and it's what a lot of the annual Kitchen and Bath Industry Show is about. Still, among the 900 exhibits sprawled over 2 million square feet of the Las Vegas Convention Center last week, there were some trendy new products both useful and affordable.

For example, about \$300 and a quick stop at the home center can get you a quieter garbage disposer, the InSinkErator Evolution Excel.

To demonstrate just how quiet, Eric Schultz, the company's director of brand and channel See **SHOW** on E4

philly.com

Watch video demos from the Kitchen and Bath Industry Show at <http://go.philly.com/kbis>



For tired well-heeled feet, Kohler's Pedicure Spa, one of 900 Kitchen and Bath Industry exhibits. The \$14,000 spa includes a whirlpool footbath and technician's chair — but no technician.

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SHOW from E1 management, ground up vegetable material and chicken bones side by side in new and old models. Then he showed off strainers filled with the resulting debris, to demonstrate how small the remaining bits were.

Priced about \$300 and up, depending on style, are Caroma's dual-flush toilets, designed for use in dry Australia but said to have sold well in North America last year. The toilets offer a choice of 0.8-gallon or 1.6-gallon flushes, billed as potentially saving 3,000-plus gallons of water a year for the typical user.

"In Melbourne, if they catch you washing your car or watering your lawn, they shut off your water," said Glenn Sheargold of SSI, Caroma's distributor in the western United States. He noted that Caroma also has developed a toilet, soon to be on the Australian market, that uses gray water from the bathroom-sink drain for flushing.

When it came to toilets, comfort seemed to be as important as saving water — the number of seat-warming devices exhibited at the show was about double last year's complement.

And in the unusual-commode-design department was Villeroy & Boch's CityLife SmartBench, truly a piece of bathroom furniture. The SmartBench conceals a ceramic toilet, and a wooden seat and storage for toilet paper and a brush are integrated into a frosted-glass panel.

"Eco-friendliness" was a popular theme at this year's show, and the products often were not homegrown. Foreign manufacturers, especially Europeans, are exporting their energy-effi-



New trends in toilets were on display, including Villeroy & Boch's SmartBench, which conceals function to the benefit of style.

demonstration counters on either side of its booth were filled with showgoers tasting Pillsbury cinnamon rolls cooked to perfection in 2 minutes instead of 12 to 15, and a turkey roasted in just 42 minutes.

TurboChef marketing chief Steve Beshara said response to the oven has been so great that "we've started developing recipes designed for it."

When Sharp introduced its countertop AX-700S Superheated Steam Oven last year for \$1,200, the company provided a cookbook to help consumers make full use of the appliance.

Several other appliance-makers have followed suit, including Ariston, whose in-the-wall coffeemaker, introduced last year, had a potful of competitors this year.



For the kitchen, the HPSmartCalendar, a digital device that keeps track of family activities.

cient products to the United States, with American firms following their example.

"We call it 'eco-leadership,'" said Franz J. Bosshard, president and chief executive officer of Bosch.

His company's entire product line is Energy Star-qualified, which means it meets Environmental Protection Agency efficiency standards. Some of the washers and dishwashers come with an "Ecooption" button that reduces energy consumption by an additional 25 percent, as well as systems that can customize the wash cycle.

"Green" qualities also were evident in materials being featured at the show, especially bamboo used in flooring and cabinetry. Teragran, one of this country's major bamboo-material producers, touted a bamboo parquet butcher block for countertops and tables.

For the kitchen, induction cooking remained a hot trend, and the number of foreign and domestic manufacturers producing cooktops took a giant leap between last year's show and this year's.

In induction cooking, a magnetic pan is used, and underneath it a magnetic field is created that transfers heat to the pan instead of the glass cooktop itself. That results in even distribution of temperature, greater control of heat, and 90 percent efficiency compared with about 60 percent for gas.

Virtually every appliance-maker was showing an induction cooktop, and prices have continued to drop — they now range from \$2,500 to \$5,000. Any number of demonstrations last week featured candy bars simmering for the entire day in a pan and, until you touched the chocolate with a spoon, the word "Hershey" was clearly visible on each piece.

Of course, there was cooking of all types going on. Turbo-Chef's \$7,400 30-inch Speed-cook Oven debuted at last year's show and has been on the market since April, yet the two

In a steam oven, superheated steam molecules come into direct contact with the food. They give off heat that penetrates the food, melting most of the internal fat and leaving moisture behind. Ariston's in-wall oven tops out at \$2,000.

Its coffeemaker costs about \$2,500, about the same price as its new competitors. Recognizing that many consumers consider specialty coffeemakers too temperamental to be part of a wall, the Italian company now also makes a countertop version for the same price.

Competition reigned in the materials marketplace, too.

Walker Zanger, the tile and stone company, touted a process for creating large-scale artisan tiles by elongating smaller ones and is collaborating with designer Michael Berman on several product lines.

"The new technology lets us create allover ... patterns to take tile to another territory," said Berman, whose designs for Walker Zanger are, in his words, "emblematic of movies of the 1930s through the 1970s."

Meanwhile, range-hood maker Zephyr is continuing its partnership with designer Fu-Tung Cheng, whose Padova hoods evoke the feeling of the kitchens of Northern Italy. Cheng wants people to "personalize design" by creating interchangeable panels of concrete, plaster and mosaic tile ranging from \$500 to \$1,300, but some of Cheng's rustic modern and ancient Roman hoods can cost in the thousands.

Design and technology meshed in several places, including the KBIS Design Idea Center that was coproduced with Meredith, the shelter magazine and book publisher; at the NextGen Home display, a fixture at every show, and in the Digital Kitchen.

What made this kitchen unusual was its relatively compact size, based on a survey conducted by the Internet Home Alliance that showed that while most homeowners wanted their kitchen to be connected and the hub of activity, "they don't necessarily want it to be large, nor do they want a separate workstation."

What the survey respondents did want was "a more innovative design that freed up counter space," said alliance vice president Tim Woods.

Most importantly, the survey revealed, they want a calendar that keeps track of family activi-

ties and that everybody can contribute to.

One solution presented: the HPSmartCalendar, part of the HP TouchSmart PC. The price of organization: \$1,849.

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