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Home / Kitchen and Bath

Culinary Spaces

Latest innovation and ideas for your kitchen

By Melissa Patterson

Today's kitchens have become more than just cabinets and appliances; they are the main focus of the modern home. Our kitchens are a reflection of the way we live and entertain. As our lifestyles change and technology advances, the kitchen industry has had to keep up with the pace. Here are some of the latest innovations to consider for your next kitchen renovation.

Personalized storage

Kitchen cabinetry of the past was considered advanced if it included a Lazy Susan and a stair-stepped

spice rack. A survey co-sponsored by the National Kitchen and Bath Association (NKBA) found that modern kitchens now require storage space for 800 items, twice the number needed 50 years ago. The success of bulk purchase warehouse stores such as Costco and Sam's Club is partially responsible for this change, but it's also a reflection of how many dinners are now prepared from boxed or frozen food.

Cabinet makers are maximizing the kitchen's storage capacity by creating concealed features such as drawer dividers, lid holders, recycling bins and pet food storage. According to Jesse Soto Jr. of Three Sons Cabinet Shop, "Rollout pantries have become one of our most popular items. They allow everything you need to be at your fingertips. They also increase your kitchen's storage capacity without having to add a lot of square footage." Many of these organizational systems can be retrofitted into existing cabinets and drawers.



Photo courtesy of Dacor

Clever appliances

Refrigerator and dishwasher drawers now have a new counterpart: the microwave drawer. Built-in under a counter, these new appliances from companies like Dacor and Sharp are perfect for islands and open-plan kitchens, as well as wet bars, family rooms and home theaters. With angled-touch controls and a sleek, integrated look, it is both attractive and functional.

For those who enjoy eating healthy, steam-assisted cooking is ideal. Miele's convection steam oven requires no special plumbing and can be built-in anywhere in your kitchen. The steam oven has an easy-to-use food-driven menu system, and its special convection air-filtration system allows you to cook several dishes simultaneously without transferring flavors.

"Aside from the health benefits associated with steam cooking, most people aren't aware of its versatility, such as defrosting," says Alice Martty of the Miele Showroom in Dallas. "Steam restores the moisture that is often lost in the defrosting process, resulting in a fresh, plump cut of meat that tastes just like it came straight from the butcher's block."

Another great innovation is the Samsung Quatro Cooling Convertible Refrigerator. It features a four-zone, multi-cycle system that has independently adjustable evaporators. With four doors, this refrigerator keeps food and beverages easily accessible. The two interchangeable bottom drawers have been engineered to shift from standard refrigerator to freezer within 30 minutes-so you can use an entire drawer for ice storage when entertaining.

In a trend toward simple home automation, hands-free and touch faucets are starting to emerge. Delta's Electronic Kitchen Concept Faucet from Brizo has a sensor that differentiates between moving and static objects. You can put your hands underneath the tap to start the flow of water. The faucet will turn itself off when there is no longer anything beneath it.

Eco-friendly

As more people become ecologically aware, the movement to reuse, recycle and refashion existing products whenever possible continues to grow.

One of the most durable and easily maintained recycled flooring systems available today is Terrazzo

flooring made by EnviroGLAS. Using multi-colored glass chips from discarded bottles, mirrors, plate windows and fully customizable pigmented epoxy resin, they are able to create a surface harder than traditional marble Terrazzo.

Consumers love it for its earth-friendly properties, as well as for its numerous design and color possibilities.

Bamboo flooring has been slowly gaining popularity for several years, but manufacturers are finding that bamboo can be used anywhere hardwood products have traditionally been used. Teragren's bamboo parquet butcher block is a stunning new product made from Moso bamboo harvested only at maturity between five 1/2 to six years.

It is made with a formaldehyde-free, food-safe adhesive, so it is ideal for counters or tables. The bamboo is available in countertop or custom sizes and comes in natural and caramelized colors.

Richlite countertops are an exciting new option for the earth-friendly set. They are made primarily of paper purchased from the managed forests throughout North America, the same material that has been used for decades by the aerospace industry for tooling, the marine industry for fiberglass reinforcement and the action sports industry for outdoor skate ramp surfaces. This special paper is treated with resin then pressed and baked to create solid sheets. It is unquestionably durable, beautiful and will last for years.



Photo courtesy of Miele