

HomeTip

Color is back in interior design. Tile follows this trend, offering designs saturated with color. Warm, neutral tones share the stage with cool-water-inspired hues.



C Outline Bagno 005

Friday, April 20, 2007

Shore Home

HomeTip



Use a decorative bezel to fit over your TV, covering front and sides panel TV so it blends seamlessly into room decor.

C West

Counter culture



"New cuts" of standard woods such as maple or cherry, and laminate have been reinvented. Also fresh on the scene are renewable "green" solutions.

Kitchen materials have come a long way, baby

By Christine Ingvaldsen
Special to ShoreView

Imagine, petrified river rock stone, quarried lava from Pompeii, burnished stainless steel plate or Italian laminates in spectacular colors, gracing your countertops. The range and quality of materials today are stunning—not to mention that they are all readily available for use in your kitchen.

What is old is new again — actually, really new. There are "new cuts" of standard woods such as maple or cherry, and

laminate has been reinvented. Also fresh on the scene are renewable "green" solutions. And, speaking of "green", there is much to be said and written about on this topic, especially in the design and building industry. There are materials today that do offer a "green" solution, such as Lyptus wood, eco-resins, recycled plastics and wood composites. Many plywoods for cabinets and other panel systems, for example, are using soy-based binders instead of urea formaldehyde and are water-based, nonflammable, and nontoxic. As the manufacturing process becomes more common and the awareness

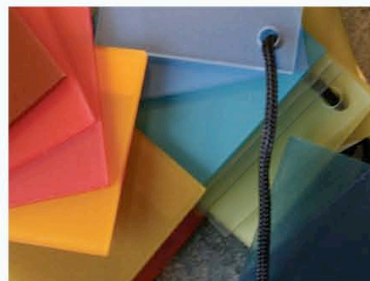
risks, more usable products are becoming available. I will reserve this discussion for a more in-depth column at a later date, when more products and more information is available.

The average life of today's kitchen is on average about 15 to 20 years — before it becomes stale, out of date, or just plain worn out. No longer are your choices for materials limited to the standard woods of years past. Thankfully, these old, traditional materials are constantly being updated, but the most exciting news is that fabulous new materials are bursting onto the scene.

Most homeowners are looking for imaginative, new ideas, not just in layout, but in materials as well. With its increased integration into the home, kitchens have become progressively lighter, brighter, and more colorful. The kitchen becomes a relaxing retreat from the pressures of daily life. Keeping the décor simple is always the best approach — but simple does not mean boring — far from it.

Typically, when we design a kitchen, we use rich colors for brightness, textures for depth, and occasional patterned materials for variety. We often mix different materials.

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'State-of-the-art features are not luxuries but standard, now.'



Kitchens: Old materials help create modern, state-of-the-art kitchens

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ing design have both the effect of warmth and the pleasure of coolness.

As kitchens have come to play a more central role in the home over the past 20 years, they have become more modern. State-of-the-art features are not luxuries but standard, now. This may be due, in part, to the ever-booming appliance industry, which has been producing more and more beautiful and durable designs suitable to a whole host of interior styles, meaning designers need to be much more flexible and ingenious. I prefer kitchens that have clean lines but have character.

For warmth, there is nothing more beautiful than wood in your kitchen especially with all the new varieties available. Wood warms the soul and is incredibly durable and long lived. Different woods such as teak, bamboo, straight grain fir, Lyptus and colored woods that have been aniline-dyed, now come in veneers (previously unavailable) that work beautifully for cabinets and specialized architectural millwork. These and many more selections are giving homeowners more choices for color, texture, and grain. No longer are you limited to the standard cherry, maple and walnut woods—although these too are beautiful. If your heart is set on using solid wood, which is a more expensive solution, then we recommend combining a hardwood solid frame with a veneer plywood panel. This will keep the door straight and flat and assure you a continuous look with your cabinetry.

Everybody loves granite for countertops. Granite is the stone of choice for kitchens these days, however it is not the only option. Even cool materials, in their natural beauty, can seem warm. Limestone, which is softer than granite, or soapstone — one of my favorites and which is where talc comes from, are good alternatives to granite. They are softer and provide a more natural look, yet incredibly durable. Interesting to note: science labs are often equipped with soapstone countertops because it is a non-porous stone, impervious to heat and chemicals — the same kind of hard use it would undergo in the kitchen. Other gorgeous alternatives to

native stone are composite or engineered stones that are now so perfectly fabricated that it is hard to tell the difference. A composite stone is made of 90 percent quartzite (stone fragments) and 10 percent fillers and resins. They are typically maintenance-free and come in as many colors and textures, some resembling real stone, while others are solid, and smooth for more modern installations.

Many different metal finishes are now making their way into kitchens. The obvious stainless steel—sanitary, durable, maintenance free—can be polished or burnished to a beautiful satin finish. Along with zinc and copper, these metals are surprisingly warm to the touch for countertops and even cabinet fronts. Zinc and copper are materials that develop a wonderful patina and change over time with wear and tear.

Laminates — used almost exclusively in kitchens in the 1950s — are sometimes (and wrongly) perceived as cheap and old-fashioned. Many may remember it from their mother's or grandmother's kitchens. But hold it, there has been a revolution in laminate manufacturing. Italy has been producing very high quality laminates in delicious colors, textures and patterns.

Some are frosted, ribbed or mottled and combine well with metallic, magnetic, matte and eggshell finishes. Laminate is an excellent choice for a backsplash because it is easy to clean. We often use laminates for cabinet doors, and sometimes for countertops and backsplashes, to give the kitchen a color rhythm that is unified by seamless hardwood or metal edgework.

We always think of the kitchen design as the design of a whole space. This may sound obvious, but often people think of designing kitchens only in terms of installing cabinets and appliances. And because we are interested in the design of the space itself, as well as the things in it, I also want to mention a few materials, such as cast acrylic and resin panels, that we have used as room dividers, as well as countertops. It is now possible to design these panels with interesting patterns and objects that can be directly embedded in the sheets. Even this man-

made material can reflect the natural beauty of the outdoors — embedded grasses, leaves, pebbles, for example.

This seems to be a particularly ripe moment for material technology and it is also a time when manufacturers are trying to practice in a more sustainable and resource-wise manner. The conventional thinking about kitchens is changing just as fast as these fabulous new materials become available and old ideas and materials are continually rejuvenated.

You don't have to rely on the old standards to give you the most when it comes to your kitchen. Most of the products I have mentioned are very durable, practical and will last the lifetime of your kitchen giving you great pleasure and enjoyment. It is an exciting and challenging time to be a designer.

Design Tip

We are all concerned with not wanting scratches or stains on our countertops — yet we all love the natural beauty of stone, which inherently is a porous and scratchable material. From medieval times through modern day, the Europeans have never sealed their stone countertops.

They believe the natural product is better used in a natural way, developing a natural patina over its lifetime. Maybe we could learn a thing or two from these age-old habits.

Editor's note: Christine Ingraham is president of Fletcher-Cameron Design, 99 Whitfield St. in downtown Guilford.



room for your car and workshop. You'll be surprised how a little organization can maximize your garage space.



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Friday, March 2, 2007



A day in the life of your kitchen

This little kitchen is a workhorse with plenty of counterspace and storage. Smart planning is the key and design with emphasis on ergonomics is essential, says the author.

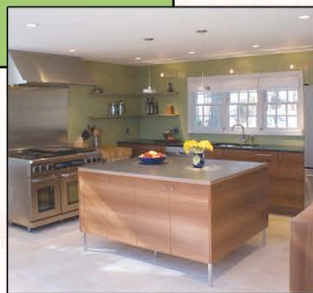
By Christine Ingraham
Special to ShoreView

Everyone knows, the kitchen is the heart, and I like to say - the brain, of the home. It's where people gather, talk, and express themselves. It's where thinking takes place. It needs to be lively, fresh, beautiful and most of all functional.

Good things are expected to come out of kitchens - good conversation and good food. Because kitchens today play so many roles, they are the most complex space of the home in terms of planning and design. We ask our kitchens to work hard and multi-task. In many homes, the kitchen is the room where everyday life happens: paying bills, scheduling the day, writing lists, packing lunches, watching TV, making phone calls, doing homework, enjoying a nice glass of wine, not to mention cooking and eating. Recently, homeowners are requesting desks, and computer workstations to be incorporated into the design of their kitchen to help with these tasks.

Kitchens are about lifestyle: they are our own private cockpit for entertaining, families, parties, and events. No matter how hard we all try to direct people to living rooms, family rooms, patios, etc., people always gravitate back to the kitchen for social interaction - at the same time the

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Good things come in small packages. The only difference between large and small kitchens is size. All the other design challenges are the same - ergonomics and efficiency, the author



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A day in the life of your kitchen, making the most of the space

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chef or cook is busily preparing a meal. Everything needs to coordinate just so.

As everyone experiences, kitchens quickly become the common dumping ground for everyday stuff, mail, etc. This, along with excessive amounts of cabinetry (at no low cost, either), clutters the room visually and contributes to the collection of – may I say – junk.

There are many opportunities to simplify and streamline the work space during the design process: i.e. uninterrupted countertops – particularly islands; floor to ceiling cabinets – both for pantry and/or storage – to maximize storage space and ultimately takes up less room; and providing open cabinets and open shelving, where appropriate. With good planning efficiency is improved.

I have mainly discussed the function of a kitchen but design and ergonomics are equally important. Kitchens should be designed to connect and complement the rest of the house but they do not have to match. With so many great choices available today for materials: woods, laminates, stones, metals, appliances, lighting, and color, we can break out of the old standard formula of kitchen planning and think new. Literally thinking outside of the box – or kitchen – as we know it.

These ideas apply equally to small spaces as well as generous ones. Here are two projects which show how we maximized a kitchen's potential. Below is a tale of two kitchens.

Small kitchen, a seamless appearance

The challenges faced when designing a small kitchen, of course, is maximizing space. This kitchen was for a traditional home in Guilford that had a beautiful sun room adjacent to a very dark kitchen. The space was broken up with walls and peninsulas that made the workable space very crowded, small and unusable. It was dark, poorly lit and full of inefficient cabinets and storage.

The client was looking for a modern open kitchen that would enable them to entertain; cook; and move about easily.

We stripped the kitchen of all walls and clunky cabinetry to one big open space. We selected Iyptus, a sustainable environmentally friendly wood species, for the cabinetry; color laminate for the walls and stainless appliances. A brushed

Cambrian black granite was used for the sink counter and a brushed stainless steel was used for the island top. Simple shelves on the walls gives plenty of space for cooking spices, oils, etc., while not cluttering the walls with cabinets. A run of cabinets was installed along the new window wall, with a freestanding range on the adjacent wall.

We decided to carry the tile floor through into the kitchen for a seamless integration between kitchen and sun room. To enhance the space, the kitchen island is raised up on metal legs. The island is large, uninterrupted and entirely used for prep space. The pantry (closet) was reorganized with chrome metro shelving for a modern look. To top off the new kitchen, halogen recessed fixtures were added; metal decorative pendants are hung over the island and modern cable lighting gave additional task light to the sink/counter area.

Large Kitchen, an ocean of space

The only difference between small and large kitchens is the amount of space. All the same challenges apply – ergonomics, efficiency of space,

coordinating the cabinet design with the desired appliances, and lighting.

The new requirements for this kitchen included a bar; computer desk; wine storage; floor to ceiling pantry storage; kitchen table; and area for children to do their homework. As discussed earlier, this kitchen is the core to daily life.

A relatively traditional home, but renovated by a modern architect, this house sits just feet away from Long Island Sound. Water laps the retaining wall constantly. Tons of light pours into the eastward windows – directly into the kitchen space. The interior coffered ceilings are beautifully architectural.

Upon first entering into the original kitchen we were struck by the amount of cabinets in the space.

Typically, homeowners think they will need and use as many cabinets as will fit onto every wall and into every corner of their kitchen space. In this kitchen there were cabinets that surrounded the entire room that were 10 feet high filled with stuff never used, and never able to be reached. When we suggested that the homeowner either discard or find other places for this storage, they were surprisingly open to follow through. Upon

redesign, the wall cabinets were lowered to a usable height. Not only did this allow for a more efficient use of wall storage but saved the homeowner additional costs that could be put to use somewhere else for upgrades or other features.

Upon redesign, the wall cabinets were lowered to a usable height; as the clients are avid cooks, the island was designed large and monolithic for maximum prep space (another typical misuse of space are two-tiered islands – again the usable counter space is diminished). New pantry cabinets showed off the height of the ceilings and bright color was added to reflect the sun through the windows. An orange-dyed wood veneer was used for all upper cabinetry and a beautiful French blue, Italian laminate was used for all lower cabinetry. Gray swirled granite was used for countertops and additional storage was added on the reverse side of the island to make up for lost storage above. Accent task light-

As everyone experiences, kitchens quickly become the common dumping ground for everyday stuff, mail, etc.

ing was added above the island for maximum use.

The result is a large kitchen with the feeling of openness like the ocean; but intimate with the efficiency of space.

Design Tip:

Create as much counterspace as possible for the space you have. Prep space is everything in a kitchen.

Editor's note: Christine Ingraham is the President of Fletcher Cameron Design (FCD), who specialize in contemporary kitchen design with a signature use of materials. Christine has been in the design business for 20 years and recently opened a kitchen show room in downtown Guilford.