

KITCHENS AND BATHROOMS

GET THE SCOOP ON THE LATEST TRENDS

BY KELLY MCCALL BRANSON



Photo courtesy of Ashton Woods Homes

Whether you're remodeling or building new, the kitchen and bathrooms are often the biggest statement makers in the home — and possibly the most complex. So many components go into the making of a dream kitchen or a killer spa bathroom, and manufacturers are continually coming out with new advances in fixtures and finishes. We've asked area experts to fill us in on the latest and greatest in kitchen and bathroom trends to help you get that wow kitchen or bath you've been dreaming of.



Photo courtesy of Ashton Woods Homes

“Clean lines and simple design, with a modern feel,” says Ashton Woods Homes’ Designer, Heather Atkins. “I think a big part of that is a desire for minimal maintenance.” The elaborate embellishment of yesterday’s Tuscan kitchens has given way to sleek cabinets, less ornate trim and quieter countertops. “We’re seeing a demand for kitchens that are not necessarily so detail oriented,” says Christine Tingen, showroom sales manager for Ferguson Bath, Kitchen & Lighting Gallery. “People are looking to create an inviting atmosphere — one that’s more approachable. And easier to clean!”

This new transitional look is a hybrid, blending the uncluttered aesthetic of contemporary design with the warmth of traditional styles. Cabinets are trending to the more simple Craftsman recessed panel or plain slab front. While darker, dramatic wood finishes are popular, lighter, painted cabinets are on the rise as well — especially in shades of gray. “Gray is really becoming quite huge,” says Christine Tingen, “in both kitchens and baths.”



Photo courtesy of Ferguson Bath, Kitchen & Lighting Gallery

COUNTERS, FAUCETS AND APPLIANCES

Countertops are likewise migrating to a less busy look. While granite is still the number one choice in countertops, the new engineered stone products, combining ground quartz with polymers, resins and pigment are non-porous and stain and crack resistant and require less maintenance than granite. "Quartz is definitely a trend," says Julie Primanti, a designer for Ashton Woods Homes. "People are leaning toward less movement and more consistency of pattern, along with less maintenance."

The new faucets are also following the less-is-more direction. "We're seeing a definite preference for single handles over knobs," reports Stephanie Miller, sales and marketing manager for Drees Homes. "Brushed nickel is still popular, and oil-rubbed bronze is coming back, but in fixtures with cleaner, more modern design." Indeed the minimalist faucet with geometric, architectural lines — whatever the finish — is a must have for up-to-the-minute kitchens and bathrooms.

Today's faucets are also going high-tech, with models offering a seemingly unlimited range of motion, multi-articulated joints, folding necks and pullout spouts. Faucets with colored LED light to indicate water temperature and motion- or pressure-sensitive faucets that turn on with the wave of a hand are more examples of the new feature-savvy fixtures available.

Appliances too offer more features than ever



Photo courtesy of Ferguson Bath, Kitchen & Lighting Gallery



before. Homeowners still want a professional look, but more and more, they are demanding greater functionality. "We're seeing the microwave getting away from over the oven," says Stephanie Miller, "and stronger, more contemporary, vented stainless steel hoods taking their place." Multi-tasking is the name of the game in the latest appliances, with speed ovens that boast the fast-cooking power of a microwave combined with the browning capability of a convection oven. "Dual-fuel ranges, with a gas cooktop and electric oven offer the best of both worlds," says Christine Tingen. "And with an increasing interest in healthy cooking at home, steam ovens are huge right now." There are even ovens available that the homeowner, from their smart phone, can turn on to start pre-heating while they're driving home from work.

GREENING THE KITCHEN AND BATH

Trends in kitchens and baths aren't just about looks, low maintenance and functionality though. More and more, homeowners are demanding greener living, and manufacturers are getting the message. "There have been so many advances in all three areas of greening a kitchen or bath," says Jeff Wiblitzhouser, president of Paradise Found Construction. "The market is responding to regulations and to customers

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when it comes to improving energy efficiency, water efficiency and indoor air quality.”

Wiblitzhouser, who offers green certification for many of his projects, reports a vast increase in the availability of low-VOC cabinets, especially those constructed to limit formaldehyde emissions. “Many of the national cabinet companies have finally gotten on board with emission specs,” says Wiblitzhouser. “And this increased availability in the marketplace in bringing prices down to the mainstream.”

The same holds true for water-saving fixtures, with an abundance of low-flow faucets and shower heads now available in almost any price range and tankless hot water heaters becoming the norm. Toto has introduced a toilet that uses only 1.1 gallon of water per flush. The new low-flow shower heads can achieve a 50 to 60% reduction in water usage, and they perform much better than earlier models, delivering a satisfying showering experience while still conserving precious resources.



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Energy Star-rated appliances are becoming the norm, with newer models even surpassing those efficiency requirements. Whirlpool has introduced a refrigerator that consumes a similar amount of energy as powering a 60-watt light bulb.

Trends in lighting in the kitchen and bath are moving toward energy efficiency as well. “You typically see the highest intensity lighting in the house in the kitchen. It’s probably the most used light,” says Wiblitzhouser. “The quality of the new LED lighting is phenomenal, and the pay-back is actually pretty quick.”

BATHROOMS GET REAL

When it comes to today’s bathrooms, the ubiquitous garden tub (that no one

ever really used) has finally faced reality and stepped aside, making way for the luxury shower and the statement-piece freestanding tub. “The frameless glass walk-in shower is what people want now,” says Drees Homes’ Stephanie Miller. Homeowners can custom-design their own spa-like shower experience, with dual shower heads, rain showers and multiple body sprays, from soft-spray to massage — even steam showers are a possibility. In smaller bathrooms, many people are forgoing the tub in favor of a glass-walled shower.

In addition to luxury showers, the freestanding tub is a hot trend. “We’re seeing the new tubs as something people really want to showcase,” says Ferguson’s Chris-



Photo courtesy of Paradise Found Construction

tine Tingen. But in keeping with the new cleaner, sleeker styling, today’s freestanding bathtubs are a modern take on the old claw foot, with simple European lines — from squared off architectural shapes to elegant swooping arcs.

Bathroom cabinetry is also following the trend toward more modern lines, with floating vanities (legless vanities, mounted directly on the wall) surging in popularity. A preference for a relaxed feel in bathrooms, with furniture-like features, continues. “Framed mirrors give a bathroom that furniture look,” says Stephanie Miller. And much like the kitchen, functionality is in high demand in bathrooms, especially when it comes to efficiency of storage, with new options in smart drawer-dividers and counter-top linen cabinets.

While the color palette in bathroom tile remains fairly neutral, abundant choices in tile shapes and sizes make customizing the bathroom more possible than ever. “Subway tile is still in high demand,” says Ashton Woods Homes’ Julie Primanti, “and there are so many other sizes now besides traditional squares — 3”x6”, 4”x8”, 8”x12” — the options are almost limitless.” Glass tile as an accent is on the rise, with more and more choices in colors and shapes entering the market.

With so many new products for kitchens and bathrooms becoming available almost every day, there’s one trend that promises to stick around for the long haul. And that’s not really a trend at all, but rather a movement toward more individualism and creative expression. Today’s homeowner doesn’t have to settle for a one-size-fits-all kitchen or bathroom. The hottest trend of all — the sky’s the limit!

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