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What's hot and what's not in kitchens?

More time spent at home this past year influencing design trends



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Ask any Realtor, designer or contractor which room in a home matters most, which room is a home's focal point, or which room adds the most to a home's value and the answer will almost always be its kitchen.

That's why more than any other room, it's the kitchen that homeowners choose to remodel when they are looking to update their homes, said Michael Morabito, principal interior designer with Coco Design Group, a



Photo courtesy of Coco Design Group

This kitchen illustrates the current trend of contrasting colors and earth tones working together in an overall clean, bright and uncluttered kitchen by Michael Morabito, principal interior designer at Coco Design Group in Tampa.

Tampa-based interior design firm.

"Kitchens are one of the best spends you can make," said Morabito, "When some-

one is looking at homes to buy online, the first photos they go to are of the kitchen."

Not only is a kitchen upgrade a solid investment,

it has a way of improving happiness, believes Chelsea Potthast, principal interior

See Kitchens on 4H



Photo courtesy of Potthast Design

Aqua and light blues are in, and they are on full display in this elegant kitchen design by Chelsea Potthast, principal interior designer of Tampa Bay's Potthast Design.

Kitchens from 1H

designer of Tampa Bay's Potthast Design. Maximizing the sense of well-being at home is something particularly important now that more time is spent at home due to the pandemic. The unique circumstances of the past year also are influencing kitchen design trends, she said.

"People want light, bright looks that fit the Florida lifestyle," Potthast said. "People want to be happy at home and feel good, particularly in these times."

Light blues and aqua elements are big, as are oversized kitchen islands with seating for multiple people. Once taboo, mixing metals for fixtures, drawer pulls and cabinet hardware is trending. Potthast is particularly fond of using brass fixtures that are not lacquered, as they develop a patina over time, adding a natural, organic feel.

Keysha Jillian, the designer-owner of K. Jillian Designs of Tampa, says her clients currently gravitate toward quartz counters. Morabito concurs, noting the manmade material has the veining and appeal of natural marble, only it wears better and is not prone to staining. Potthast prefers quartzite, which is a very strong, natural quartz.

Homeowners of late have

become more daring, and are opting for colorful accents to liven up and brighten kitchens. Like Potthast, Jillian sees the trend toward mixing metals. She thinks it reflects the current tendency to be more free and open about the less conventional. At the same time, there is some return to previous trends, like gold fixtures making something of a comeback in 2021.

All three of the designers agree that wood-look vinyl plank flooring currently dominates — even on the floors of their most high-end, high-dollar projects. The technology has come a long way, and the best vinyl looks great while having the advantage of being waterproof and long-wearing, they say.

Another trend these three designers see is more people opting for appliances that accept panel facades that match the kitchen's cabinetry, creating a hidden or built-in look. Stainless steel appliances still have a place in many designs, but over the past few years, white or black has gained some ground.

Another common feature is oversized islands. Jillian notes that kitchens are increasingly gathering and entertaining spaces when friends or family members visit, and large or even double islands with lots of

seating are ideal for accommodating guests. Jillian said "waterfall" islands, where the countertop seamlessly transitions 90 degrees and flows/falls down to the floor, is a look many want today.

Potthast said a popular alternative countertop edge finish is a mitered or dupont edge, which provides an ornate appearance similar to what's seen in custom-crafted crown or base molding.

Morabito said the overall color trends emerging put the previously popular medium grays in the rear-view mirror. Lighter grays and other light paint

colors, along with white shaker-style cabinets, are strong now. But so are natural, warm and earthy wood tones. Another trend Morabito sees is toward better organization systems for cabinets and pantries. When a homeowner opens a cabinet door or pantry, they want to see neatly organized contents, decorative, matching jars with clear labels that create "a cohesive look," she said.

Another thing all three designers agree upon is the importance of lighting in a kitchen. It has to be functional for cooking and food

els with new appliances is a good budget that Tampa Bay-area homeowners with typical 3/2 homes should have. A job could come in for less, and most certainly can go higher. Much depends on the cabinetry chosen, said Potthast, as there is a major difference between the cost of custom-built cabinets and off-the-shelf cabinets.

As many homeowners are more focused on improving their homes since the pandemic began, costs will be higher than prior to the pandemic. Material costs have skyrocketed over the past year; the supply of materials

now.

Getting a contracting crew on the job is a wildcard. With so many homeowners focused on home improvements, it could be one to six months before work starts. Delays in permitting and inspections have to be factored in, as well.

Potthast said with all the uncertainty and backlogs, her rule now is to double the quoted time for a completed job.

A final thought these designers shared is that unlike in the past, when "safe" choices in design were the rule to ensure a kitchen would have more universal appeal should the house be put on the market, the trend these days is for homeowners to "treat themselves" to what they want and not worry if their kitchen creations end up "too personalized."

"We see people being more playful and not as concerned about trends," said Morabito.

Potthast said there was time when she made sure her design elements had a fair degree of universal appeal, but these days she's more daring and open to clients' desires, even if they are a bit quirky.

"I used to design with resale in mind, but not so much now," she said. "You're living in your home so you need to love it; when it comes to resale, you can cross that bridge when you come to it."

That said, anyone remodeling to sell needs to keep in mind that a neutral approach is wise. She's working on a Clearwater home now and designing for broad appeal.

"If I'm designing for a sale, or doing a house being flipped, I keep (neutrality) in mind," Potthast said.



Photo courtesy of K. Jillian Designs

This is the kitchen of a Temple Terrace home before Keysha Jillian, the designer-owner of K. Jillian Designs of Tampa started work on it. Several years outdated in style, it was ready for a makeover.



Photo courtesy of K. Jillian Designs

Here's the same kitchen after a complete overhaul, including new appliances, wood laminate flooring, new cabinetry and lighting.



Photo courtesy of K. Jillian Designs

A mix of hanging pendant lighting and recessed ceiling lights really shows off this kitchen. Note the oversized island, a current trend according to Keysha Jillian, designer-owner of K. Jillian Designs of Tampa.



Photo courtesy of Potthast Design

Light colors and classic marble countertops, along with distinctively trimmed cabinetry make this kitchen designed by Chelsea Potthast, principal interior designer of Tampa Bay's Potthast Design, really pop. Bright and cheery, it's a look many want right now.



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prep, but also should enhance mood and spotlight features or interesting elements in the room.

"You can make a statement with lighting," said Jillian. "It's something you shouldn't overlook."

These designers believe \$30,000 and \$60,000 for complete kitchen remodel

is down and wait times to get a contractor on the job are up. One big snafu now is long delays in delivering new appliances.

"I ordered a refrigerator four months ago and they are telling me it won't be delivered until July," said Jillian, adding that waits for custom cabinetry are longer



Photo courtesy of Potthast Design

Elegant under-counter and inside cabinet lighting make this kitchen glow. Lighting and how it is used to highlight the features of a kitchen, as well as serve functionally, is important, according to Chelsea Potthast, principal interior designer of Tampa Bay's Potthast Design.