



NKBA

BEAUTY MEETS PRACTICALITY

THE 2011 KITCHEN & BATH

by Nancy Atkinson

At the end of each year, more than 100 designers, who are members of the National Kitchen and Bath Association (NKBA), complete a survey about the details of their most recent kitchen and bath projects. The NKBA uses this information to forecast design directions for the coming year, and we pay close attention.

We're interested in the patterns emerging across the nation. But what matters even more is hearing the local perspective on kitchen and bath design from those in the industry. We talked with some of Charlotte's best builders, kitchen and bath designers, experts in plumbing fixtures and appliances, and tile designers to learn the significance of these trends in our market.

The 2011 NKBA survey revealed 11 distinct trends in kitchen and bathroom design. From the beauty of Shaker-styled furniture design, quartz countertops and vessel sinks to the practicality of concealed trash storage and wine storage in the kitchen, we found many similarities in our market.

Shaker Simplicity Still Timeless

While traditional styles remain the most popular for kitchen and bath designs, Shaker and Contemporary styling are gaining in popularity, according to the NKBA survey.

The Shaker focus on quality, orderliness, and cleanliness is a perfect fit for our post-recession, 'less is more' mindset. Remodeling contractors Duane Johns of Advanced Renovations and John Morgan of the Urban Building Group both say they are building more streamlined kitchens, with a clean cabinet style and sleeker, more contemporary finishes.

“In the Charlotte market there is still a very high demand for quality frameless cabinetry in a cleaner, more streamlined appearance,” says Morgan, who explains that the great thing about a Shaker door is its versatility. “It can go from contemporary to traditional by altering the bead detail, panel raise and edge profile.”

Local kitchen and bath designer, Caren Bistany of Bistany Design, added “I’m seeing cleaner lines, simpler doors, but very nice millwork and architectural details customized to fit the style of the home. Charlotte is still a somewhat traditional market but we see our clients modifying a raised panel, widths of the frame of the door and interior profile of the door to more updated and personal look. All leaning towards a more refined look though.”

But the Shakers of the 1770s would never have dreamed of the technology that Duane Johns is now incorporating into homeowners’ Shaker-styled kitchens. “My clients want entertainment systems integrated into their kitchens, including flat screen televisions, audio systems and iPod docking stations,” he says.

Johns explains that with living spaces more open, the kitchen, dining room and den areas become one communal space. “Incorporating a flat-screen television and other technologies into the design of your kitchen makes sense if the kitchen is going to be center of your home,” says Johns.

Drama in the Dark

As the kitchen takes center stage for entertaining and family gathering, darker cabinet finishes have become a sophisticated, elegant option. The NKBA reports that 53% of their designers are using darker finishes, as opposed to the white painted, light natural, colored or distressed finishes, which were more popular a year ago.

Kitchen and bath designer Keri Henley, CKD, CBD, a chapter officer with the Carolinas Chapter of NKBA, says painted finishes are still really big in the Charlotte market, with homeowners preferring varied heights and depths of cabinets. “However heavy glazing is on its way out,” she says.

Morgan recently completed two kitchens using Shaker-style cabinets in darker finishes of cherry espresso and dark mocha. Dark finishes add a richness and depth that is the perfect complement for gorgeous countertops and sleek appliances.

“We are seeing both stained and painted finishes used in our kitchens,” said Bistany. “For woods, walnut, cherry, and mahogany tend to be the more popular choices. They all stain beautifully and offer a very timeless classic look with either a stain-only or stain and glaze. We do a lot of solid paint kitchens without a glaze. If we do a glaze it is very subtle. Solid paint colors can vary from your traditional white to tinged neutrals in shades of beige, grey, blue, or green. All in a matte or semi-sheen, not high gloss. Grey has become very popular too.”

Quartz Countertops Shine

The NKBA survey found quartz countertops are becoming more popular in bathrooms, second only to granite. But our designers love using quartz and other interesting natural materials on kitchen countertops.

Tile designer Erika Saubers of InStyle Charlotte recently completed a kitchen using Blizzard Cesarstone quartz countertops to complement Shaker cabinets in an espresso finish.





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Saubers noted that Vetrazzo, a recycled glass and concrete countertop, is making a huge buzz right now. “The extra large pieces of glass within each slab have a multi-dimensional, reflective property that makes it different from other countertops,” she says.

For tile, Jennifer Creasser-Bridges, with Tile Collection, says nothing is more timeless than soft glass mosaics and striking stone for kitchens and baths.

“Glass tiles always have a way of adding light to a space with reflection and with textures and colors, allowing you to customize any area, whether traditional or contemporary,” she says. “Grey tones are everywhere in tile right now. People are stepping away from a rustic/Tuscan look and requesting clean lines and cooler tones.”

LED Lights the Way

According to the NKBA survey, use of LED lighting has increased so much among designers that incandescent lighting is on its way to being obsolete. Only 35% of designers used incandescent lighting in 2010, opting for more energy-efficient options such as LED (light-emitting diode), which 54% said they had used on a recent project. Builders Johns and Morgan both say the public is beginning to embrace LED lighting. They have both recently used LED for under-cabinet lighting, where the lower heat emitted by LED lights is preferred. Morgan also uses Xenon lights, which are similar to LED but less expensive.

Wine Has Its Place

According to the NKBA, wine refrigerators are on the decline, but wine storage at room temperature is growing in popularity. More than half the designers surveyed, 51%, said they incorporated wine storage into recent kitchen designs while only 39% had done so the year before. The NKBA survey says pull-out racks, tall pantry cupboards and lazy Susans are on the decline.

Refrigerators Get a French Accent

French door refrigerators, with a bottom freezer drawer are growing in popularity. In the NKBA survey 78% of designers specified a French door refrigerator on a recent project.

Cheryl White, appliance expert with Queen City Audio Video and Appliances, says the newest refrigerator from KitchenAid has French doors, a bottom freezer and a horizontal pantry drawer.

“It’s technologically advanced and has everything you could ask for,” she says. “It’s 30% more energy efficient than standard refrigerators.”

Designers Hide the Trash

While refrigerators take the spotlight, kitchen designers are putting trash in its place. In 89% of their recent kitchen designs, NKBA members included trash and/or recycling pullouts. Garbage disposals and trash compactors are also being specified more frequently, a sign of our increased environmental awareness.

Toilets Come Clean

Shaker simplicity doesn’t stop at cabinets. Cassie Abernethy with HD Kitchen and Bath Collection in Charlotte

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Kitchen & Bath Trends

