

# Kitchen designs focus on function and access

by Janice Tiger-Kramer  
If you're remodeling or updating an old kitchen, or designing one in a new home, keep two things in mind: rely on imagination and don't stick to rigid design rules.  
Of all rooms in the house, only the bathroom gets more use than a kitchen, but the kitchen still gets a tougher workout than any bath, design experts say. From late night visits to the fridge to the preparation of gourmet meals, the kitchen is one room that begs streamlining and efficiency.

KSI, a Brighton-based kitchen and bath center with branches in Birmingham, Livonia, Ann Arbor, Mount Clemens, Southgate and Waterford, uses computer-aided design to show kitchen layouts to potential customers. Unlike a traditional, flat floor plan, a 3-D, color drawing is often all it takes to convince a hesitant customer to begin remodeling, said Todd Sloan, manager of the Birmingham store at 1839 S. Woodward.

"If a customer's trying to decide between two floor plans, the 3-D drawing really helps illustrate each plan's efficiency," Sloan said.

Regardless of the kitchen's size, there's always a way to make the area more accessible, more functional and easier on the eyes.

New products used in today's kitchens range from granite and stone countertops to primitive-style cabinet doors with clean lines.

KSI recently introduced Merillat's new Shaker door, which covers the entire cabinet opening. The look is sleeker than a Colonial-style door, but still traditional, Sloan said. KSI likes installing the Shaker cabinets at staggering heights, leaving space above the cabinets for shelves. The Shaker door doesn't include fancy trim or moldings, Sloan said, but homeowners can embellish the look by accessorizing their new kitchen shelves.

DeGiulio Kitchen & Bath, 724 N. Woodward, Birmingham, recently introduced painted cabinet doors with a "rubbed through" or washed out finish that has an Old World look, said the store's co-

owner Daniel DeGiulio. The "rubbed through" doors come in colors like hunter green and wine berry — two in-demand tones. The new door is especially compatible with natural stone or marble countertops, which have red and green-tone accents, DeGiulio said.

Though natural products are popular, most remodelers still opt for laminated tops, according to Sloan. Laminates are now sold in 600-700 colors and can be combined with a sleek Corian edge, or trim piece, for a more customer look, Sloan said.

More homeowners are equipping their kitchens with commercial-grade appliances not because they're cooking more frequently, but because they like the heavy look of professional equipment.

"People are just tired of very contemporary, sleek-looking appliances," DeGiulio said.

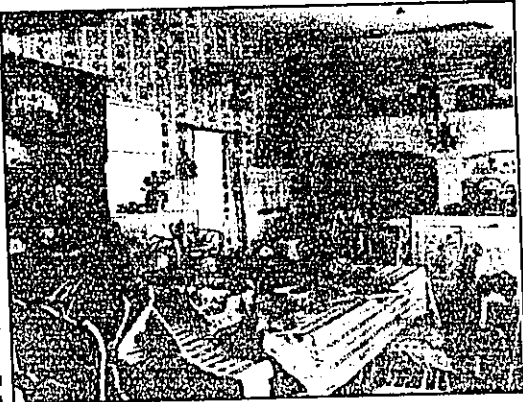
Amateur chefs and weekend gourmets especially like commercial ovens and multipurpose range tops because they're functional and very reliable, he added.

The popularity of all-white kitchens — the color of choice for the last two years — is waning, according to Dave DeRemer, architect for The Great American Kitchen & Bath, 3065 Orchard Lake Road, Keego Harbor.

"Seventy percent of everything we sold last year was white," DeRemer said. "Now, off-white, cream and light woods are replacing white cabinets."

Most appliances sold at The Great American Kitchen & Bath, and its sister store Living Spaces, 2678 Orchard Lake Road, Sylvan Lake, are black or white. But remodelers are adding pizzazz with brightly-colored cabinets in dark blue, red or hunter green, according to DeRemer, who likes using painted cabinets with stainless steel cooktops and wood accessories.

For flooring, home-



owners prefer ceramic to wood, but pre-finished, hardwood floors are becoming more popular for home remodeling.

Anyone who cooks on a regular basis knows a kitchen needs to be well-designed to be functional. The kitchen's basic design generally includes a pie-shaped work area for cutting, cleaning and cooking. Other ideas to facilitate a user-friendly kitchen include:

- Appliances with sensors and touch control pads.
- A dishwasher that can be opened from the left or right-hand side.
- A built-in jar opener for elderly hands.
- Child-safety latches on cabinets.
- Pre-set temperature controls on faucets.
- A multi-level island or peninsula to accommodate all family members.

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