



Bathing at home in beauty

It all started with the shower massage. Those pulsating, variable-speed jets of water were the nearest most people could get to the soothing, magic water fingers of a Jacuzzi. And then health club memberships prices soared and people were no longer content to pay money to feel good.

The home spa was born.

The first place the new spas showed up was in the bathroom. Jacuzzi jets became available for tub installation, turning ordinary baths into whirlpools. In new condominiums and luxury apartments, spa-equipped bathrooms became standard amenities.

From that humble beginning, spa fixtures began to take over until it became possible to build elaborate gym-bath complexes featuring such things as steam cabinets and prefabricated saunas.

Some supremely water-conscious types even added such items as isolation tanks — with their super-saturated and botanical baths to their water closet wonderlands.

SPAS WERE IDEAL because they could be built anywhere indoors, so long as the floor would support the extra weight.

But it took the invention of the all-wood "California hot tub" to get people out of the bathroom and into the backyard. Free-standing wooden tubs have been in use for centuries in Asia, but it took the Western world a little longer to catch on to the benefits of a long, luxurious soak.

Today hydrotherapy spas and hot tubs account for a major portion of the billion-dollar pool industry.

Like pools, they have evolved in style, becoming more elaborate and refined. It's not uncommon to see pool/spa combinations that feature such whimsical additions as waterfalls, flower-draped decks and fountains.

Outdoor spas can be connected into indoor living spaces with the use of decking material. Antique tiles can be salvaged from stores and building sites to give a spa a classical look. A more modern dwelling might require concrete or brick to finish off the look.

The most popular spa size is 6 to 7 feet in diameter and 3 feet deep, which makes it perfect for city dwellers where space is at a premium.

If your lifestyle is a mobile one, you might consider a portable spa rather than an "in-ground," permanent one. In addition to being less expensive (by

about \$2,000), portables offer flexibility. You can move them from indoors to outdoors or from one location to another.

AMONG THE QUESTIONS you need to ask when considering a spa purchase are:

- Where will it go? There are advantages to both indoor and outdoor designs. You'll need to check building code restrictions before installation, and that may affect your final decision. One advantage to indoor spas is that they can be enhanced with special infrared and ultraviolet sun lamps for winter use.

One compromise to the in/out question is solved by placing the spa in a solarium or other semiopen structure. Customized, prefab rooms are available from a variety of sources. Greenhouses have been adapted to this use.

- What style do you want? The basic choice is between the fiberglass models and the all-wood hot tubs. Fiberglass is generally easier to maintain, and it is insulated and will retain heat longer. Otherwise, it's a matter of choice.

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Cabinet face-lift

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ware and complete the installation of the doors.

Installing new drawer fronts involves a similar four-step procedure:

1. Remove all drawers from cabinets and take off all handles, knobs or raised moldings. It is not necessary to remove the existing drawer fronts themselves because the new solid oak ones mount over the old ones. The replacement drawer fronts come in three sizes which will accommodate nearly all drawer sizes.

2. Using a hand saw, cut off any lip or overhang on your existing drawer fronts so that they are flush with the sides, top and bottom of the drawer.

3. Line up the new drawer front so that it centers over the trimmed drawer and covers the drawer opening completely.

4. Apply the finish, then, from the face side of the new drawer front, drill holes so you can attach new drawer handles. In most instances the screws used to attach the handles will be adequate to secure the new drawer front in place. Complete the installation of the drawer fronts.

ACCORDING TO MASONITE Corp., which handles the refacing system, the average kitchen is composed of 15 cabinet doors and 11 drawer fronts which take between 16 to 24 hours to reface and finish.

For the relatively few hours involved, refacing may be the answer for the do-it-yourself enthusiast. Another advantage is less disruption to the normal everyday use of your kitchen. While you are refacing your cabinets, you still have the use of them, and avoid the mess that comes when you tear out your old ones and replace with new ones.

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