



Designers “In Sink” with the Trends

What’s New in Sinks?

Ask a group of designers what the workhorse of the kitchen is and it’s a good bet the replies will be the same. “The kitchen sink is the single most used piece of equipment in the entire house. Period,” says Lu Samu, a kitchen designer in Saratoga, New York. “The sink happens to be the most used kitchen feature, bar none,” writes Lyn Peterson of New Rochelle, New York. “It’s the primary center of the kitchen,” echoes Pat Gaylor of Montclair, New Jersey.

Not too long ago, a big stainless steel range was a kitchen’s main attraction. Lately, the spotlight has shifted to sinks, now appearing in a wide array of shapes, sizes, types, colors and materials. Today, a sink can be one of a kitchen’s most distinctive features and can elevate the room into a strong fashion statement. “We probably spend 75% of kitchen time at or near the sink,” writes Peterson in her new book *Real Life Kitchens*. “Why shouldn’t a sink be the knock-out in the room?”

Designers agree on and applaud the growing variety of the hard-working sink, but that is where the unanimity ends. While Lyn Peterson says, “Stainless steel is ending its decade long reign as THE sink,” others still opt for stainless at the main workstation. Gaining in popularity are the metals – copper, hammered nickel, oil rubbed bronze and even recycled aluminum. Diane Peiper reports that in her Denver and Colorado Springs interior design business, “Copper and brushed nickel sinks have become very popular because they become the topic of conversation when someone walks into the kitchen.”

And, like a blockbuster playing on multiple screens in the same theatre, kitchens nowadays showcase a double feature, sometimes even a triple feature of sinks. Meal preparation has gone from a solitary task to a family activity, and even a communal affair during home entertaining; so where space allows, designers fit in multiple sinks. “Most clients request at least one for prep and another for clean-up,” says Samu. “But, I never match them.”

Those proliferating sinks have grown in variety and size. Peterson’s clients want auxiliary sinks that are useful, ones that take some of the workload off the primary sink. “This much is certain,” she says, “If it is in an island or peninsula, the sink needs to look good when not in use.”

Increasingly, the second sink is metal, like a hand-hammered sink in copper. Naomi Neilson of Native Trails, the leading producer of handcrafted copper sinks, says the company has tripled the number of bar and prep sinks in its product line in the past two years. The combination of the deep color, unique material and handcrafted character adds a distinctive, decorative element to many a kitchen décor. “The prep sink is where a designer can get really creative,” says Howard. “Many designers use the hand-hammered surface as a textural counterpoint to a running expanse of smooth countertop,” says Howard. Also, copper is being worked into new contemporary shapes by the Native Trails artisans providing daring new options for prep and bar areas.

“A sink with a bit of artistry makes a kitchen design a very personal thing, and something that savvy clients want,” says Gaylor.” She often specifies hand-hammered copper sinks for butler pantries and for Craftsman-style kitchens, noting that the hammer hits on the sink effectively carry through the handcrafted theme.

Copper is also a medium that allows for sculpted detail on its surface, another very artisan touch. Native Trails offers island sinks detailed with a pinecone motif in relief, perfect for a mountain cabin; and one rimmed with dolphins, ideal for a beach cottage.

The breadth of choices for sinks today has added some much-needed variety to kitchen design, most designers agree. And, the same is true in the bath. Sometimes, all it takes is a beautifully crafted sink, say in brushed nickel, to turn a small space into dazzling design. “It’s like adding one great piece of jewelry to accessorize an otherwise very simple outfit,” says Peterson.