



# Form Meets Function

TODAY'S KITCHENS AND BATHROOMS ARE CHIC, STREAMLINED AND HIGH-TECH

BY EUSTACIA HUEN

Feeling a little crowded lately? It's not your imagination. With a growing population – and a finite amount of land – space is becoming more and more of a luxury, especially in urban areas. According to *The Guardian*, more than 2 billion people are projected to move to big cities by 2035, forcing homes to grow vertically and become denser.

So how do we adapt to diminishing space without compromising quality of life? Open floorplans and amenities optimize space – and create the illusion of additional space – by allowing areas to seamlessly transition into one another. This is especially effective in the home's most practical rooms: the kitchen and bathrooms.

"We will see things like open shelving in kitchens, barrier-free bathrooms, home automation such as smart home systems and even wider door openings that make our homes flow and function better for everyone," says Felicia Clark, creative director for the decorative products division at Bedrosians Tile & Stone in Pompano Beach.

Other options include eat-in kitchens, pull-out counters and clever storage solutions, says Stephanie Pierce, director of design and trends at MasterBrand Cabinets. The goal is to maximize efficiency while creating a sleek, contemporary and uncluttered look, which is the fastest-growing aesthetic for 2017, according to Alexis Neocleous, manager of Calligaris in Boca Raton.

Of course, the use of several appliances and technological devices calls for good cord organization and well-lit, multifunctional workspaces, notes Pierce.

"Power integration and LED lighting are essential considerations for kitchens," she says.

What about the clunky plumbing systems often found in bathrooms? Many products today are designed to conceal unsightly parts. For instance, Geberit, a Swiss brand of toilets and plumbing supplies, produces the Monolith system, which hides plumbing components in a minimalistic glass tank. Beyond saving up to 9 inches of space, Geberit systems can help cut water use, Remodelista reports.

As the delineations between rooms in the household become less strict, kitchens and bathrooms are emerging as more versatile living spaces.

"Kitchens in particular have become a multitasking hub," says Gerri Chmiel, senior design manager at Formica Corporation. "With homeowners spending more time doing things other than cooking there, today's kitchens are not only beautiful but also practical and durable enough to fit different lifestyle needs."

This results in "shifts toward more personal design elements," Pierce adds.

Chmiel predicts a rise in interactive, writable surfaces in the kitchen, she says: "Homeowners want spaces to communicate – whether it's to stay connected, manage schedules, express personality, play a game or just create."

As for bathrooms, there's a demand for spa-inspired environments, including soft, dimmable lighting from multiple sources for warmth and quiet drama as well as recessed wall details to provide added dimension and display space for bath products, candles and more, says Marla Jaffe, director of design and business development at Clive Daniel Home in Boca Raton.

For an authentic spa experience, she adds, "salt walls made with 100 percent pure Himalayan crystal salt are hot this year."

At the 2017 National Kitchen & Bath Show, Pam Moskowitz, vice president of business development at Allied Kitchen & Bath in Fort Lauderdale, observed

trends such as “virtual rain showers, three-part shower heads and showers with customizable massage and chromatherapy.”

According to Erin Hardy, national design manager of California Closets, LED lighting has also advanced by leaps and bounds: “There’s a wealth of custom LED lighting designed to fit different needs and aesthetics, transforming spaces and enhancing the beauty of natural materials.”

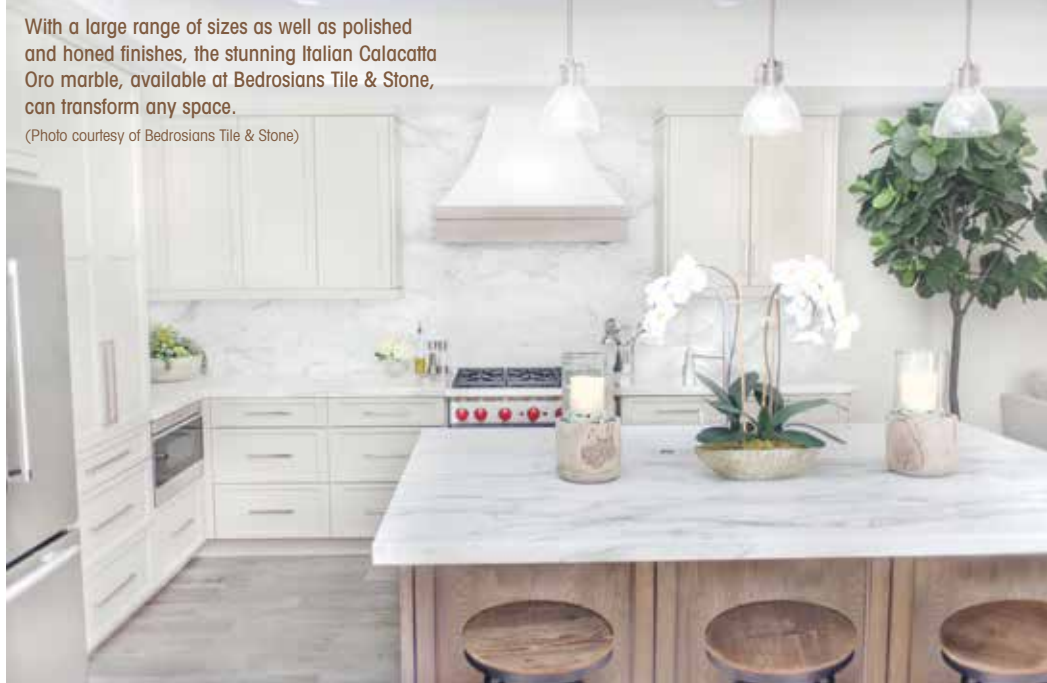
With the rise of all these technological advancements, today’s modern consumer expects ease of use in every corner of the home. A *Better Homes & Gardens* Real Estate study found that “77 percent of young homebuyers are looking for a home with ‘smart’ innovations that allow users to control lights, security, temperature and even blinds with the touch of a button from your smartphone.”

In the bathroom, smart technology comes in the form of steam showers being preheated by an app, showerheads syncing to a smartphone for music and chatting simultaneously, music speakers in medicine cabinets and TV and computer screens embedded in wall-mounted mirrors, says Debbie Miller of Millers Elegant Hardware in Boca Raton.

The options are even greater for kitchens: smart refrigerators that manage your food supplies via Samsung and Amazon, the app-controlled Smarter iKettle & Coffee Machine and even Moley’s first smart Home Robotic Kitchen.

Resistant to water, fire and acids, Spazio Marble & Granite’s highly versatile and eco-friendly Epic Porcelain Slabs are impact-resistant and easy to maintain.

(Photo courtesy of Spazio Marble & Granite) ▼



With a large range of sizes as well as polished and honed finishes, the stunning Italian Calacatta Oro marble, available at Bedrosians Tile & Stone, can transform any space.

(Photo courtesy of Bedrosians Tile & Stone)



Keep your kitchen counters clutter-free by tucking away electrical cords with the Omega Power-In-The-Drawer Feature by MasterBrand Cabinets, available at Distinctive Kitchens & Baths.

(Photo courtesy of MasterBrand Cabinets)



Calligaris recently debuted the Fenix NTM Table Top Material – an innovative working surface that’s very opaque and soft to the touch and doesn’t show fingerprints.

(Photo courtesy of Calligaris)

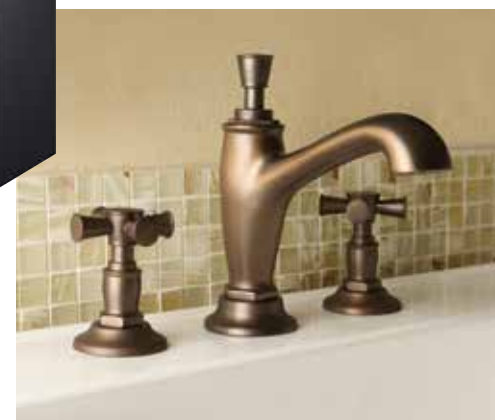
The new-and-improved smart fridge Family Hub 2.0 by Samsung Electronics has internal cameras to manage food supply; a recipe app; voice technology; and a range of food, security and entertainment options.

(Photo courtesy of Samsung Electronics)



Newport Brass’ Vander faucets – available in 28 unique finishes, including antiqued brass, antiqued nickel, aged brass and English bronze – provide a stylish accent in the bathroom.

(Photo courtesy of Newport Brass)



Dimmable, versatile and energy-efficient, Modern Forms’ Loft LED Vanity/Sconce Luminaire, available at LBU Lighting, delivers a streamlined and contemporary look to the modern home.

(Photo courtesy of LBU Lighting)

Hassle-free materials are also in demand, says Neocleous: “New materials that require minimum maintenance – that are scratch-proof, stain-resistant, thermal-shock-resistant and chemical-resistant – are among the more popular styles this year.”

Think hardwood floors, wood-look porcelain tiles and quartz countertops.

Another hot material is marble, says Clark: “We are seeing more home accessories made out of marble to get that ‘wow’ factor. A white marble kitchen or bathroom is jaw-dropping gorgeous and will stand the test of time.”

However, some argue that natural materials are more difficult to maintain than their faux counterparts. New products in the latter arena excel in both form and function, reports *House Beautiful*.

For example, the new Epic Porcelain Slabs at Spazio Marble & Granite in Boca Raton are not only beautiful but water-, impact- and scratch-resistant.

Coupled with the fact that smaller mixed mosaics are making way for larger tiles, adds Clark, expect a stronger statement in the area of wall tiles, which also require less cleaning of grime and grout.

However, at the end of the day, notes Eric Lebersfeld, president of Capitol Lighting in Boca Raton, “style will always beat efficiency for most homeowners.”

So what styles are hot for 2017?

Sleek storage meets luxury finishes in California Closets’ Toronto Pantry, a refined organization system with hidden storage compartments, transitional antique-bronze hardware and pullout racks for convenient access.

(Photo courtesy of California Closets)



Versatile, easy-to-clean and durable, Formica Writable Surfaces come in a range of chalkboard and marker-board options for sharing messages, drawing and more. ▼

(Photo courtesy of Formica Corporation)



The wall-mounted Neorest AC toilet by TOTO, available at Millers Elegant Hardware, has a self-cleaning system, a warm air dryer, a heated seat, auto lid-opening and closing mechanisms, an in-bowl deodorizer and more.

(Photo courtesy of TOTO)



Available as one- or two-drawer cabinets, Hastings Tile & Bath's Onda Vanities add visual interest to the bathroom with unique curved fronts and walnut or colored lacquer finishes.

(Photo courtesy of Hastings Tile & Bath)

"The trends appear to be continuing along the lines of clean, contemporary shapes, interesting colors and materials," says Bob Gifford, director of bath products at Hastings Tile & Bath.

When it comes to hues, "gray continues to be the top pick for kitchen color schemes," says Sue Wadden, director of color marketing at Sherwin-Williams. As for the rest of the household, she says, "there are four key palettes in 'Colormix 2017: The Sherwin-Williams Color Forecast,' reflecting the ever-changing societal and cultural landscape in the world today."

Noir comprises rich colors evoking vine-ripened fruits; Holistic features arctic neutrals such as wild browns and blush roses; Intrepid

The Theta LED Pendant by Hubbardton Forge, available at Capitol Lighting, is a unique LED light sculpture handmade with patterned steel and bright aluminum and finished with soft gold or vintage platinum.

(Photo courtesy of Hubbardton Forge)



Add metallic glamour to your walls and backsplash with the silver Montane Mosaic – a blend of stone, glass and metal on 12-by-12-inch sheets, available at Bedrosians Tile & Stone.

(Photo courtesy of Bedrosians Tile & Stone)

consists of fiery oranges and simple black, white and gray; and Unbounded includes earthy mustards and browns as well as ocean blues and coral.

"These colors – blushes, taupes and warm neutrals; deep, dark jewel tones; citrus greens; and soft pastels – share a vision of renewed spirituality, body and soul nourishment and a determination to define a sense of self," Wadden says.

The Pantone Color of the Year 2017, Greenery, hasn't been featured prominently in home products yet.

"While Pantone's Greenery could appear in paint colors fairly quickly, I expect the new Greenery tone to show up in home products in the next 12 to 18 months," Moskowitz notes.

For a final touch, David Emmons, marketing director for Brasstech, Inc., parent company of Newport Brass, notices greater demand for warmer finishes, including aged brass, antiqued brass and antiqued nickel.

The interest in these more traditional options doesn't surprise Clark, as many companies, including Bedrosians Tile & Stone, are more focused on people's lasting needs than passing trends, he says.

"People want designs that work well in everyday living – something you can look at every day and not get tired of it. They want things that are versatile yet different enough to stand out. Basically, everyday living taken up a notch." ○

Thermasol's Serenity Light, Sound, Rain Head, from Allied Kitchen & Bath, delivers an elevated shower experience with two rows of 82 easy-clean neoprene jets, color-changing lights, in-shower LED lighting and a high-quality subwoofer and amplifier.

(Photo courtesy of Allied Kitchen & Bath/Thermasol)



The Salt Chamber Brick Wall, available at Clive Daniel Home, turns any bathroom into a home spa with its de-stressing properties. The Himalayan salt wall also looks great when backlit to emphasize its natural color.

(Photo courtesy of S.A.L.T. Chamber, LLC)

The HiMirror is a smart device that analyzes your skin condition, tracks its progress and provides beauty tips. It even has a preinstalled camera lens cover to protect privacy.

(Photo courtesy of HiMirror)

