

# visions

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IN THIS ISSUE:

## 2007 Kitchen & Bath Trends

Consumers demand tranquil,  
practical living spaces



MICHIGAN

# Kitchen and Bath

## Mixed surface treatments and classic lines

**"T**ranquil" and "transitional" are among the watchwords for kitchens and bathrooms in 2007. Bathroom inspirations come from the spa and the beach, while kitchens are becoming more specialized and less busy. The "transitional look" includes classic lines and subtle curves, but in pared-down, fresh interpretations. This is a practical, attractive design approach for Americans seeking efficiency, relaxation and comfort in their homes to help them deal with their ever-more-complex lives.

### Kitchens

The overall trend for kitchens is moving towards a calmer and sparer look. In some cases, large appliances are being disguised and integrated into the rest of the decor. In others, they are growing larger, to become focal points in themselves. In either case, it is becoming increasingly common to see some spaces simply left open without appliances, fixtures, storage space or decoration. These open spaces have a calming effect, allowing both the eye and the mind to relax.

The kitchen is not just for food preparation anymore. It's also a place for family and guests to gather. As the pace of life speeds up, the kitchen takes on additional functions. Long ago we saw the introduction of the miniature television to the breakfast table; now, the kitchen must accommodate numerous technological gadgets.

"In the future, I see kitchens becoming more streamlined and even more techno-savvy, because our lives are getting fuller," says Vita Buffa, CKD ASID, a designer with Extraordinary Works ([www.ewkitchens.com](http://www.ewkitchens.com)) which is located at the Michigan Design Center in Troy. "We have so much going on in our lives. We have battery-powered devices like cell phones and iPods and BlackBerries, so you need space for a charging center. Meanwhile, embellishment is becoming simpler; even the appliances are disappearing."

### Colors, Surfaces and Materials

Natural textures and simple, sophisticated finishes are the rule. These may be organic (such as the always-popular hardwood and limestone), or more modernistic in feel (typified by highly-finished surfaces and an increasing use of glass). Stainless steel, of course, continues to be popular.



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# Trends for 2007

## make for tranquil, practical living spaces



DESIGN BY EXTRAORDINARY WORKS

However, there is a strong trend towards combining it with contrasting materials like darker-toned woods. In fact, mixing and matching a variety of materials in one room is a distinct theme in itself.

"Hardwood still continues to be a hot item for floors, even in kitchens. People like the warmth of it," says Fred Flock, CKD and CBD, a Designer with Bella Cucina Inc. in Sylvan Lake ([www.bellacucinakitchens.com](http://www.bellacucinakitchens.com)). "Natural stone would be the number two choice. There's quite a variety, depending on whether it's more contemporary or more traditional. With backsplashes, ceramic tile continues to be the number-one choice, but we're also using stainless steel, natural stone, and mixtures of material. Also, subway tiles are popular. They provide more of a plain, institutional look."

Buffa agrees that multi-finishes are becoming more popular. For instance, one

decor style might feature stainless steel with glass and stone. "I'm also seeing the use of combinations of woods, like mahogany and cherry, as well as oaks. I'm working on a kitchen right now where the wood is weathered to give the look of a cottage. In these cases, the interest is in the way the different grains are combined. European designers are doing more of this kind of work than we are."

### Cabinets

The "transitional" look is increasingly found in kitchen cabinetry. This is a style that refers back to the simple, classic and functional lines of early 20th-century design, but with a fresh, more streamlined interpretation. It incorporates curved lines and some embellishment, but in moderation. Transitional style is being applied in high-end kitchens where cabinets (and, in some cases, major appliances disguised as cabinets) are custom-built into the walls.

Flock describes a popular choice: "A simple, classic, 1920s-style cabinet made of white painted wood with exposed hinges and latches. It has glass doors (without mullions), which is sometimes inset with a decorative bead around the edges."

Alternately, Buffa describes an increasingly popular range of high-gloss finishes, such as an automotive finish applied over a rosewood veneer. She points out that the look can be copied successfully with vinyl, achieving a surface that's "almost like a piano finish."



DESIGN BY EXTRAORDINARY WORKS

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PHOTO COURTESY WATERWORKS

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### Countertops

The use of multiple materials carries through to countertops. A single kitchen might have wood, stone and stainless steel counters in different areas.

"In general, I'm finding that kitchens are becoming more and more highly personalized. Our clients have a pretty good idea of what they'd like to have," Flock says. "Depending on the client's physical stature, they may even want to lower or increase the height of the counter surfaces, and we install a variety of heights of countertops for various tasks."

### Sinks and Faucets

Perhaps the plethora of stylish cooking shows and celebrity chefs on television is partly responsible for the trend that sees home kitchens borrowing many features from the amenities of the professional cook. Among others, the secondary prep sink is becoming a popular add-on, as is the professional-style pull-out faucet for rinsing dishes or vegetables.

Adam Tillman is Showroom Sales Executive with Kohler Company ([www.kohler.com](http://www.kohler.com)), based in Ann Arbor. "One of the things that we're finding successful is a nylon hose, rather than steel, on the pull-out portion of the faucet. Steel is loud and can scratch the counter surface," he says.

Tillman describes a recent innovation that has proven to be popular with designers and clients: the "low-rise" sink. This is a double cast-iron sink with a half-height divider between the two bowls. It holds a smaller amount of water than a normal sink, but this is sufficient for most modern households, where the sink is only used to rinse dishes before they're stacked in the dishwasher. This design is only available in cast iron so far; it can't be duplicated in stainless steel.

"I think we're starting to notice the return of color to the kitchen," Tillman adds. "We have over 24 colors in the cast-iron sinks, and we're even seeing more color in granite surfaces. Designers can tie together the different colors of granite and stone that people are putting into their countertops."

### Refrigerators

As previously mentioned, many designers are disguising major appliances such as refrigerators, freezers and dishwashers within cabinetry to give the room a more unified overall look. Smaller appliances, such as microwave ovens, may be concealed in pull-out drawers. However, there is also a trend towards larger refrigerators, often with stainless steel or glass doors, which become a focal point of the design. This is consistent with the apparent wish on the part of some clients to simulate the clean and practical ambiance of an industrial kitchen.

In a similar vein, "We are designing a lot of large kitchens with two or more smaller refrigerators at different points, to serve different functions," says Flock. "In these cases, there might be a cook's refrigerator for unprepared food items

and another one, closer to the dining room, for condiments, beverages and convenience food. It's a concept that has been borrowed from the restaurant industry, where the various chefs each have their own refrigerator with their own ingredients that they use at the point of preparation."

### Cooking Appliances

At one time, a North American kitchen boasted a single range with built-in oven. Now it is likely to be accompanied not only by a microwave, but by numerous specialized cooking appliances as well. This is yet another area in which the movement is towards the specialization and capabilities of a full restaurant kitchen.

Cooking appliances may be built-in or used on the counter when needed. Some favorites include diner-style grills or griddles. However, with the growing awareness about nutrition and its link to health, steamers are becoming more common as these allow for food preparation without the addition of extra fats or oils. Flock notes that steamers come in many styles, including countertop models, drop-in steam-cooking wells and steam ovens.

"If you have the space to design the kitchen of your dreams, you'll have separate steamers, separate fryers and grills, as well as ovens and stovetops, so you can cook many different dishes at the same time," says Buffa. Not surprisingly, the higher the budget, the more likely it is that the client will request more varied cooking options. Buffa adds that it is now possible to install built-in, automated controls for each appliance.

### Bathrooms

As the spa concept becomes better known and more popular across North America – not only with women, but with men as well – the idea of turning shower or bath time into a regenerating private moment is taking hold. This in turn is having an effect on the way we view our bathrooms. North Americans are spending more time

than ever before in this room, whether they are bathing or dressing, or perhaps indulging in a home spa treatment like an exfoliating herbal mask, a relaxing pedicure or an aromatherapy soak with essential oils or mineral salts.

Throughout the 20th century, bathrooms grew larger and new amenities were added. The trend continues in this direction, to the point that the tub and toilet are merely the beginning in a room that may include luxuries like towel warmers, heated flooring, a television or even a wet bar. The bathroom may be divided into several separate areas: for the toilet, for the tub or shower, for dressing, and even for listening to music or brewing a cup of coffee. Whether it is used to start the morning in an invigorating way, or to unwind from the stresses of the daily grind, the bathroom is embracing multiple functions and new possibilities.

### Colors, Surfaces and Materials

The transitional look is found in bathrooms, too, says Barbara Sallick, Co-Founder and Senior Vice President of Design at the head office of Waterworks ([www.waterworks.com](http://www.waterworks.com)) in Connecticut, with a store on Merrill Street in Birmingham.

"It still has classic overtones in the balance and the scale, but the lines are a little bit cleaner than you would have seen in the 1920s. For the first time in quite a while, we're beginning to see the use of some color in bathrooms. That has been a little bit of a surprise for us," she says.

Although white is still predominant, especially in fixtures, Sallick describes soft

and beautiful blues and what she calls "pumice", a pale neutral color between a light beige and a gray.

Part of the inspiration for bathroom color and texture is taken from the soft, organic hues of beach sand, shells and stones. The spa trend is also influential, with its emphasis on tranquil colors and lines. Simplicity and minimalism, with extreme restraint in ornamentation and as much restful, naturalistic lighting as possible, are keynotes of the spa sensibility.

Alongside these beach-inspired textures, colored glass is being used in floor-to-ceiling installations. Perhaps surprisingly, the larger the area of color used, the less it is likely to clash with the relaxing simplicity of the overall design, Sallick explains. She says that the two most popular colors come straight from the tropical beach: the aqua and dark blue of Caribbean seawater. A second dependable color choice is a rich amber yellow with strong tonality.

"It's interesting that we see a use of color in glass that we would not see in ceramic," she says. "Because glass is somewhat transparent and reflects light in a different way than ceramic, it feels light rather than heavy. The transparency or translucence of light reflecting off glass makes it seem extremely rich and jewel-like. When you pair these glass colors with white fixtures or a beautiful white stone floor, they feel very sophisticated, very grownup and also soothing."

To accompany these colors, there are several new finishes for cabinetry, says Tillman. Kohler has come out with new

ash and white ash finishes this year, as well as a deep cherry mahogany and a bamboo. "This year, our designs have a transitional look and feel," he says. "They are able to blend traditional and contemporary looks."

### Fixtures

In keeping with the spa influence, an adult may want a luxurious tub where they can enjoy a candle-lit bubble bath or a whirlpool experience – perhaps for two.

However, the demands of daily life suggest that there should also be a shower for quicker, everyday use. In fact, showers are becoming more prominent, and the two-person shower is becoming more common. To this end, soaker tubs and closet tubs are making a slight comeback, because clients are choosing to install them in place of a whirlpool, which they may not have time to enjoy. Instead, they are investing the money they save into the shower (and they require an excellent shower head with good water pressure and sometimes multiple features).

No matter what the configurations of bath and shower – and Sallick says she is seeing them all – "The bathroom itself has become a room that simply denotes luxury, relaxation and the enjoyment of private time. It really is an important part of this adult space."

One-piece toilets are becoming more popular. They are much more esthetically pleasing and easier to clean than a separate bowl and tank. They are often sized to "comfort height", the normal height of a typical chair.

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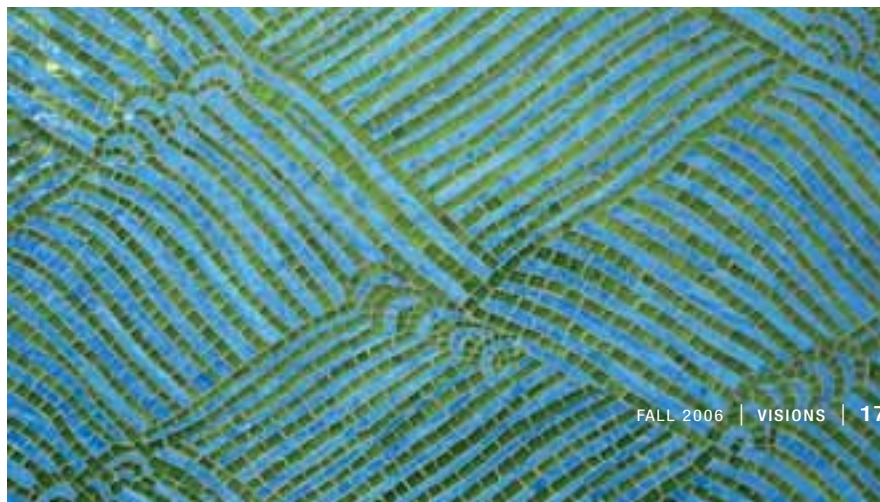


PHOTO COURTESY WATERWORKS

Despite the use of color for walls, white continues to be the most popular color for fixtures, to the virtual exclusion of all other possibilities. White fits with every decor scheme, no matter how modern or traditional it may be. It is invariably practical, and always looks clean and inviting.

### Faucets and Fittings

Brushed nickel and stainless steel finishes are still strong for faucets and other bathroom fittings, with chrome also gaining in popularity because of its clean and streamlined look. Kohler is offering brushed bronze, brushed nickel and brushed chrome, as well as a finish called Brazen Bronze, the company's take on a dark, oil-brushed look. Meanwhile, Waterworks is finding that its Architectural Bronze is much in demand, especially in mountain regions and Spanish Colonial settings. Also popular is its "Concordia" finish, which is brass with overtones. Of course, a final

choice of metal will ultimately be determined as much by local water conditions as by design considerations.

Ultimately, the trends of the moment take second place to the right marriage of form with function. "Many pieces of furniture, fixtures and fittings purport to be traditional, but you must be sure the balance and the form really look right. You must truly use the eye of the artist to make your very best judgment," cautions Sallick. "Whether we're talking about the bathroom or the kitchen, we're talking about the same thing: we're looking for things that are beautiful, and you have to use very strict criteria to decide what that is."

A consistent theme in all of these choices is the increasing client demand for living spaces that can accommodate a wide range of activities, whether these are related to working at home, entertaining, children's activities or private relaxation.

### Going Green

There is also a growing awareness among consumers about the value of "going green."

As energy costs continue to climb, more and more end consumers are seeking energy efficient appliances that provide not only a better alternative to high energy costs, but also fit the aesthetic needs of their home. The number one topic among end consumers who are currently in the building and remodeling stage has been related to "Green Design."

With most dishwashers consuming seven to 10 gallons per wash cycle and washers consuming 44 gallons per wash, consumers have turned to European-made products that have had a long history of energy efficiency. The Asko line, for example, features dishwashers that only consume five gallons of water per wash and washers that use a mere 15 gallons per wash. Not only are they energy efficient but they offer all the internal and external bells and whistles that high tech end consumers are seeking.

Alternative forms of energy such as Wolf Appliance's new induction cook top are also becoming more popular. Induction cooking, which has been used in European homes for decades, has caught the attention of American consumers. Food cooks efficiently while the cooking surface stays cool to the touch. Not only does it have a sleek design, but its immediate controllability adds to its energy efficiency - responding 50 per cent faster than gas or electric.

With so many factors to consider and so many choices available in materials, fittings and finishes, bathroom and kitchen designers clearly have their work cut out for them.

"Overall, the predominant idea is to create more flexible living space in the kitchen, the bathroom and in the rest of the house," says Adam Tillman. "These rooms are flexible and simple, all at the same time." |