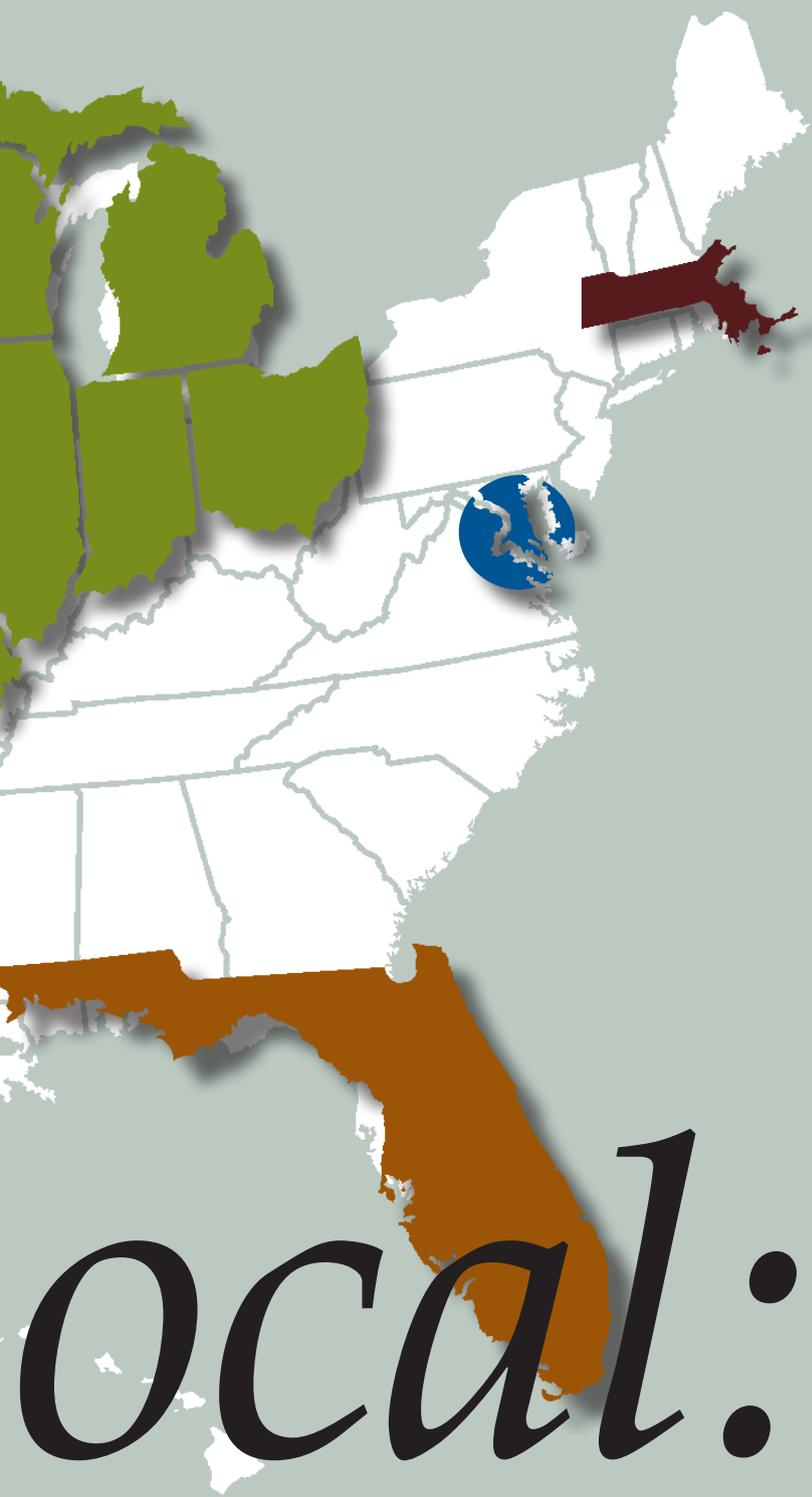


*Think L*

REGIONAL KITCH



Across the United States, diverse architectural styles and geographies greatly influence regional kitchen and bath design. **Here, we look at current trends in California, Florida, Boston, Washington D.C. and the Midwest.**

BY DAVID WHITEMYER

# LOCAL: KITCHEN & BATH TRENDS

## *There's no universal American kitchen or bath style.*

Interiors vary greatly among the 50 states—as widely as the people who inhabit them. Even within the same region, customer cravings differ if they're urban or suburban, conservative or trendy, traditional or contemporary.

The broad range of architectural styles in the United States greatly influences regional kitchen and bath design: contemporary and Asian-rim in the West, colonial along the upper Atlantic, plantation formal in the Southeast, and a prairie school aesthetic in the Midwest. Even climate and geography affect regional styles. Cool tile flooring and cathedral ceilings are dominant features in warmer areas, while wood flooring is more common in northern states.

Traditionally, design trends have tended to flow from the East and West coasts inland. What's hot in the nation's breadbasket may be passé on the Pacific shoreline. But because of the Internet and the plethora of design publications and home renovation television shows, this flow has sped up in recent years. In addition, trends nowadays are more prone to pop up in any city and spread across the country.

**JUST AS THE TERRAIN DIFFERS** from the northern point of the elongated state to the southern point, so too do California's preferred kitchen and bath styles. "There's an interesting thing that happens here," says Sarah Lynch, editor-in-chief of *California Home + Design* magazine. "There's a lot of modern design in the L.A. area, a more traditional look up in the Bay area and a mixture of both in between."

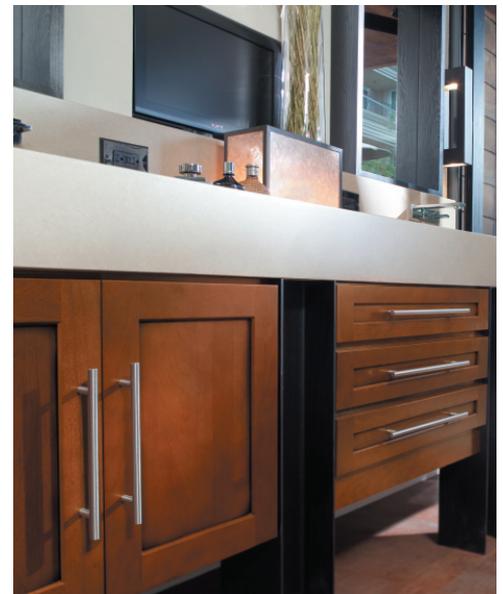
THE GOLDEN STATE:

# CALIFORNIA

But throughout the state, some trends remain constant: The contemporary West Coast trend seems devoid of ornamentation and full of color. Clean, crisp lines and modern materials such as stainless counters are all the rage, Lynch observes. Disappearing casework also is popular, where cabinet doors are flat and seamlessly run together, and hardware is eliminated.

While marble and stainless counters are still common in kitchens, stainless appliances are no longer as trendy. "They're no longer trophy items now that everyone has them," she says. Stainless appliances are still popular for mid-scale kitchens, but many high-end homeowners instead choose to mask them with wooden appliance panels.

In both kitchens and baths, poured concrete countertops are making a splash in California,



Poured concrete countertops (above) have become a popular trend in California, as have vibrant and multicolored tile backsplashes (below).



## QUICK TAKE

- The broad range of architectural styles in the United States greatly influences regional kitchen and bath design, as does geography.
- California home design isn't as opulent as it once was. While marble and stainless steel counters are still common choices for kitchens, stainless appliances are no longer as trendy.
- Fussy aesthetics have made a departure in Florida, where homeowners now look for simplicity, clean lines and less detailing.
- In Washington, D.C., where traditional has always been the mainstay, there's a push toward sleek and modern design in urban areas.
- Boston-area kitchens and baths have become something of showpieces, with large dining tables lit by chandeliers, replacing kitchen islands.
- Kitchen and bath design in the Midwest is all about warmth, particularly with regards to flooring—darker colors, wood materials and heated floors.

as is concrete flooring. "It has that streamlined look," Lynch says. "Plus with the flooring, you can imbed radiant heating."

Dealers and their clients can have a bit of fun when selecting colors, as the fad is to go bold. "I've seen racecar red and lime green walls. Colors from the '70s are everywhere," Lynch says. Vibrant, multicolored tile backsplashes remain popular.

Some color trends may be an evolution of vernacular styles. For instance, reds and terra cotta are popular in Spanish and Mexican designs in Southern California. Up in the wine country, where architectural references to Tuscany and Provence can be found, shades of green are born from the vineyard fields.

THE SUNSHINE STATE:

# FLORIDA

ART DECO, SOUTHERN PLANTATION and Mediterranean revival may immediately come to mind when thinking about Florida design. But current kitchen and bath trends aren't swinging toward styles of old, says Olivia Hammar, publisher of *Florida Architecture* magazine. Mirroring California, today's Florida homeowners look for simplicity and are eager for clutter-free spaces. "We're seeing clean edges and very little detailing," Hammar says. "Fussy aesthetics are out."

Hammar attributes some of this to the poor economy, which hit Florida quite hard. The mid-century modern trend with its flat woods and thick lines, popular after World War II when Americans scaled back, has returned with a contemporary twist. Florida K&B dealers can also work fiscal responsibility into clients' homes by encouraging energy-efficient appliances, recycling stations and durable materials. All of these are fashionable in the Sunshine State right now, Hammar says.

Exotic marble countertops (right) and recycling stations (below) are both popular in Florida.



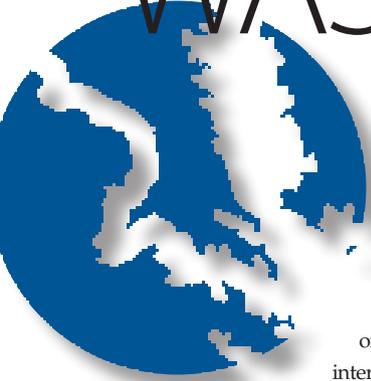
Also a result of the current market, homeowners now choose to remodel rather than buy new homes. Newly renovated Florida kitchens and baths often incorporate exotic marbles and quartz composites, as well as stone and porcelain tile flooring. In addition, drawer-type dishwashers and refrigerators are chic, as are energy-saving appliances.

Traditionally, Floridians have lived in a vacation state of mind, which is manifest in kitchens that are large, designed for entertaining and create an open-air, outdoor feeling inside the home. Unlike in risky California, Hammar says color schemes in Florida stick with neutrals because of home resale value.



## THE CAPITAL CITY:

# WASHINGTON D.C. AREA



**"OUR AREA HAS BEEN** known to be less daring and more traditional," says Sharon Jaffe Dan, editor-in-chief of *Home & Design*, a regional shelter magazine that focuses on fine architecture and interiors in Washington, D.C., Maryland and Virginia. "The

most popular homes in this region are colonial, so the kitchens and baths reflect that architecture."

Yet at the same time, she adds, there's a push toward sleek and modern, particularly in urban areas. "We're seeing more bold and daring," says Jaffe Dan, describing kitchens and bathrooms with bright greens and blues. "We're also seeing a lot of contrast, where homeowners pair very dark cabinets with light counters."

Granite is becoming outmoded in the nation's capitol. Instead, many kitchen workspace counters incorporate white and gray marble, and synthetic quartz materials that are stain-, scratch- and heat-resistant.

With flooring, whether wood or tile, bigger appears to be better. "Tiles and planks are becoming oversized," Jaffe Dan says. But supersizing isn't limited to flooring. Bathrooms also are expanding with adjacent wardrobes and dressing areas, and kitchens are growing larger with integrated mudrooms. These additional spaces are often as well equipped as kitchens and baths, with seating areas, skylights, chandeliers and custom cabinetry.

At the moment, craftsman style, with its strong woodwork and coffered ceilings, is unusually popular in the region, Jaffe Dan adds. She attributes the mix of so many divergent styles with the fact that Washington, D.C. is an international city. "People from all over the world are bringing their own regional design styles and cooking customs to this great city," she says.

For example, Northern Europeans typically have small, minimalist kitchens, whereas Southern European style includes more ornamentation and flair. Middle Eastern and Asian cooking is often a social affair. A city filled with diplomats, visiting military and lobbyists from across the globe is bound to include myriad interior styles.



Many D.C. area homes now feature dark cabinetry, light countertops and wide planked floors.



Bright colors are popular in Boston powder rooms.

## THE SPIRIT OF AMERICA:

# BOSTON AREA



**PERHAPS REFLECTING THE NAUTICAL** heritage of New England, yacht latch hardware is showing up in many of the Boston area's kitchens and baths. "It's all the rage," says Rachel Slade, home design editor at *Boston Magazine*, referring chiefly to the high-end homes of Beacon Hill and the Back Bay. Also filling up those

upper-crust rooms are professional ranges, speed ovens, and refrigerator and pantry doors with see-through glass doors.

In many Boston area homes, kitchen islands are being replaced with beautiful dining room tables. Instead of



OUR NATION'S HEARTLAND:

# MIDWEST



Today, floors in Boston area kitchens have gone dark to contrast with lighter cabinetry.

island light pendants, chandeliers dress the central focus. "The kitchens are so showy now that people want to entertain *and* eat in them," Slade says.

Boston-area K&B dealers know white kitchens have been the dominant style for years, but Slade doesn't see that changing any time soon. What has changed is on the horizontal surfaces. "Floors are going very, very dark to contrast with the light cabinetry," she says. Deep, rich walnut is a popular, durable choice. On the counters, zinc is replacing stainless steel as the trendy metal surface. "It's softer and warmer to the touch," Slade says.

The same juxtaposition of Yankee conservatism and Ivy League edge can also be seen in bathrooms. "Powder rooms have gotten funky with over-the-top wallpaper and colors," Slade says. But in master baths, tradition reigns with large, central tubs and neutral colors.



**WHEN IT COMES TO KITCHEN** and bath design in the Midwest—where winter temperatures can be bone-chilling—warmth is key, says Kate Flaherty, vice president of building products and special projects for Merchandise Mart Properties Inc. in Chicago. "I've seen a lot of tile flooring in the South because it cools the space, but the Midwest uses a lot of hardwood flooring," she says.

Many Midwest homeowners opt for heated floors to stay warm in the colder months. "Darker floor shades are also popular because they really warm up a space," she says.

Because the Midwest is vast and diverse, not all design trends are universal throughout the region. The biggest difference is found among suburban and urban homes. "Most suburban homes feature more traditional styles, while urban homes feature more contemporary and modern spaces," Flaherty says.

Those urban style trends include the use of sleek, contemporary kitchen cabinetry and stainless appliances without visible hinges to blend seamlessly with cabinetry.

The most universal trend throughout the region is the use of the kitchen. The kitchen has virtually replaced the dining room and serves as the home's "great room," Flaherty says. "In the Midwest, the kitchen is the heart of the home where everyone gathers whether for entertaining or for simply doing homework," she says.

Another universal trend Flaherty sees is the comeback of brass and gold hardware for kitchen and bath cabinet doors, faucets and other hardware.

But not all Midwest trends are as dramatic as brass and gold hardware. "I've been seeing a lot of gray and white in kitchens and bathrooms lately. Gray and white is a soft, elegant palette that will work in any space, no matter the style of the home," Flaherty says. "It's the new black and white." WP

Brass hardware (far left) and kitchens as great rooms (left) are two Midwest design trends.