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in the northland

COWBOY
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KITCHENS
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LAWNS &
LANDSCAPES

THE GOOD LIFE

Steve Frey | Weston Red Barn Farm

TRENDS & YOU

CELEBRATING YOUR SIGNATURE STYLE

design trends are pretty serious stuff. Many women wait with baited breath on what the newest styles will be that hit the runway so they can incorporate those style trends into their wardrobe. You know who you are. The same holds true in the world of kitchen design. Every other year Milan hosts the International Design Show and I make my pilgrimage to Italy to partake in all that is new and cool. But wait. Let's not get carried away in all of this high style, high design – remember, avocado appliances were once the must-have kitchen statement and parachute pants were considered chic. With that said, I know many that go full fledge on whatever is in vogue while others, me included, take these trends and fads and measure their integrity and strengths and then mix them into their own signature style. This also applies with kitchen and home design. One must consider what trends are truly worthy of your attention and investment. The answer lies within each of us. We each need to take an assessment of our own unique tastes, styles and needs when it comes to our kitchens and living environments so it's important to focus on only those trends that bring the greatest benefits to our own story. Home renovations, especially kitchen remodels, can have an enormous positive impact on the overall atmosphere, "the look," quality and livability of your home. So identifying your tastes, style and needs is an important first step in a meaningful design process with the ultimate goal of achieving an environment that is not only beautiful and functional but also a statement of the homeowners' unique signature style. To that end, let's explore some of the latest trends in kitchen design and what benefits they can bring in terms of a lifestyle statement, increased functionality, and of course aesthetics that are all uniquely you.



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design for lifestyle

OK, who are you? How do you live? How do you want to live? Lifestyle is perhaps the single most important consideration in kitchen design. How is it used? Who does the cooking? Are there multiple cooks? Do you entertain? What's the family dynamic – young family on the go, power couple or empty nesters? These and many more questions need to be answered in order to create a comfortable, dynamic place for your family and friends. Over the years the kitchen has evolved from a single purpose room reserved for the preparation of food into a multi-purpose environment no longer just for cooking but also entertaining, relaxing, studying, even watching television or listening to music. So with all this in mind, how do some of these trends apply to you?

Think multimedia - This aspect of design for lifestyle is the trend toward incorporating technology into the kitchen. With the proliferation of wireless technology, it's now easier than ever to bring a rich multimedia experience into the kitchen in the form of flat screen televisions, multi-source audio systems and touch screen computer systems. Granted, bringing technology into the kitchen lends itself more to contemporary designs but can also be integrated into transitional and traditional designs with the help of a savvy design professional.

The Specialty Zone - These specialty centers are seamlessly incorporated into your kitchen and celebrate the things you love. A great example of this trend is "your kitchen as a coffee house." Our society just loves their coffee and it's reflected in how many outfit their kitchens. Who doesn't like to linger over the morning newspaper with a cup of gourmet coffee or >>>

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cappuccino? Then what better way to celebrate this morning ritual than having a dedicated coffee bar as part of your kitchen design with an integrated coffee/espresso machine and cabinetry devoted to storing your cups, utensils, coffee and accessories. One low fat latte please!

Do you love to bake? Then a lowered marble countertop with specialized cabinet storage for your bakeware, mixer and ingredients would be a great consideration in your kitchen's design. Do your children like to do their homework while you prepare dinner? A designated work area with a raised counter and cubbies below are a practical design solution. Maybe even a mini-fridge drawer just for them stocked with yogurt and juice for that afternoon snack.



functional design trends

It's been said a million times but it's true - the kitchen is the hub of the home. It's the busiest area of the house. It's also one of the only areas that's expected to be highly functional and visually appealing all at the same time. Much like lifestyle considerations, designing for function comes down to how you specifically use your kitchen and what unique features and elements best serve your needs.

One of the more practical trends in kitchen design is the evolution of the island, also known as command central. For years the kitchen island was relegated to the utilitarian task of extra counter space and storage. Sometimes the designer added a cooktop or sink but no real thought went into utilizing the kitchen island to its full potential. Today, they take center stage adding lots of individual design panache and functionality. Our designers are creating islands that incorporate built-in ovens, warming drawers, dish washing drawers, countertop steamers, specialty storage cabinetry, and specialized work zones. With efficiency in mind, there is no better multi-tasker than a well designed kitchen island. Your island can do all of this plus be a major contributor to making a signature statement in your kitchen. Many islands have a very unique perspective from the perimeter cabinetry which adds interest and style.

I always feel like "the more the merrier" in the kitchen so multiple prep areas to accommodate shared cooking duties are key components in designing for maximum function. More and more we are celebrating the process of preparing food together, be it couples or families, so special considerations need to be made for multiple work spaces, sinks, prep areas, as well as the most efficient placement of cooking appliances.

aesthetics

What does a little black dress and kitchen cabinetry have in common? More than you might think. In fact, the fashion and cabinetry industries share a lot in common when it comes to design standards and

trends. Think about it, the fashion and design industries each have their own standards - fashion has the little black dress, kitchen design has the efficient work triangle. These are the classic basics from which to build upon. From there you bring in new elements or accessories to bring your lifestyle and expression to the forefront.

Evidence of how these trends are shared between the fashion and kitchen design industries are how bold colors are making their way into kitchen design. This was particularly evident when I last attended the International Design Expo in Milan, Italy. Rich purples (think eggplant), taupes and black & white color schemes adorned cabinetry, countertops, appliances and wall colors. Let's think, didn't we add some purple to our wardrobes this past season. And black and white is always chic. Black is practically my uniform! The taupes that are fabulous as accent cabinetry are also the hottest nail color. Kitchen designers are also taking their cues from their counterparts in the fashion industry in regards to the use of intricate textures like CaesarStone's® new Lace and Crocodile textures that are part of their new Motivo™ collection are really amazing. Remember, embrace what brings out your kitchen's personal best form, function and style. Another trend aimed at improving kitchen aesthetics is mixing in glass doors and open cabinetry to break up continuous stretches of wood cabinet doors. This increases the overall aesthetics making the cabinetry more furniture-like and results in a much more stylish appearance and a considerably less utilitarian look. The use of glass, clear acrylics and lacquered finishes in various design elements and accessories throughout the kitchens design also mimics that of current designs in the jewelry industry - think lacquered bracelets and acrylic necklaces. I'm a "pearl girl" myself and one of the cabinet manufacturers we use has designed a beautiful cherry mitered door that has the unique detail of inlaid wood beading, classic, like a string of pearls.

More and more, kitchens are incorporating elements of the adjoining living spaces such as dining areas, great rooms and hearth rooms. Consequently, kitchen cabinetry is looking more like fine furniture with premium finish treatments, glazing and distressing that transform cabinetry into works of art. These can be free standing pieces that reflect a certain furniture style or architecture. Or built-in custom cabinetry embellished with finely detailed accents and moldings. A mix of finishes within the kitchen is a very strong trend that helps enhance the overall aesthetics of the open floorplan.

While it's true that the upscale markets often drive innovation, these trends always become available at virtually every price point. There are an abundance of choices today in kitchen cabinetry, countertops and appliances that can meet the needs of every Kitchenista. Kitchen remodeling remains one of the most versatile ways to refresh your home and enhance the beauty and style that should translate throughout your home. Remember, no matter what your personal style might be - traditional, contemporary, transitional - your kitchen should embrace your lifestyle and how you live. It should directly reflect in its design and how it functions and, like your personal wardrobe, the kitchen should embrace and celebrate your signature style. **h**