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From: BUILDER 2009 | Posted on: April 27, 2009 2:44:00 PM

10 Luxury Products Worth Seeing at the 2009 Kitchen and Bath Show

Despite the weak economy, high style and chic design will be on display in Atlanta.

By: Nigel F. Maynard

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Last month, the Washington, D.C.-based American Institute of Architects (AIA) released its quarterly home design trends survey, and the news was not very good for luxury kitchen and bath products.

The report said the popularity of high-end features such as wine refrigerators, drinking water filtration systems, and renewable flooring materials had slipped, but that interest in eco-friendly features and building materials had remained strong. "Because of concerns over affordability and re-sale value, it's not surprising that there has been a sharp decline in demand for high-end kitchen and bath products," AIA Chief Economist Kermit Baker said in a statement about the findings.

Not so fast, says the [National Kitchen & Bath Association](#). On the eve of its annual—and very popular—Kitchen/Bath Industry Show, which is slated for this week in Atlanta, Suzie Williford, president of the New Jersey-based NKBA, asserts that luxury goods shouldn't be overlooked as an option by builders, architects, or remodelers. "Luxury products are playing the predominant role in our business today," she recently told BUILDER. "In this economic climate, higher-end remodels and custom homes are the strongest part of the market, and they require luxury products."

Such customers also benefit from the spectrum of choices now available to designers and clients, Williford says. "Moderately price brands are creating and unveiling luxury products in their particular price range to deliver a higher-end product to their loyal users to circumvent losing clients to a luxury line, all the while keeping budget in mind," she explains. "All projects have a budget, regardless of the size or scope, and luxury is a multi-tiered concept. I say 'luxury' is a relative term."

So while high-end buyers may no longer have money to burn, they do still have it to spend. Or so manufacturers are hoping, with many companies still unveiling big-ticket kitchen and bath items at next week's show, regardless of the weak economy. Here are the 10 luxury products we think are worth checking out, whether you're doing product research online or you're heading to Atlanta to see such options in person.

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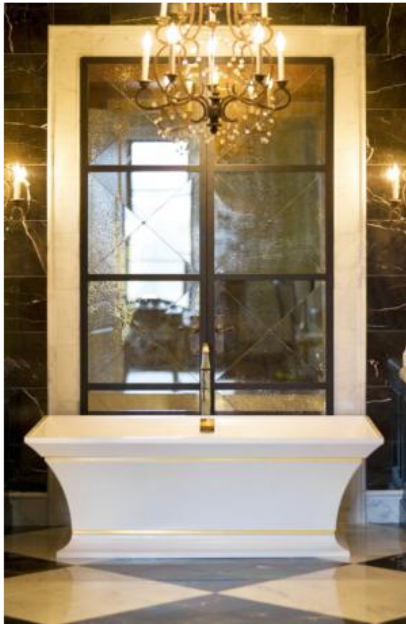
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MTI Whirlpools: This new luxury collection of solid surface bath products by designer Matthew Quinn is highlighted by the Intarcia tub with antique brass inlay. Available in white, biscuit, raven, and osprey, the tub can be specified with or without either of two pedestal bases and be configured to accept an inlay of a client's choosing: metal, glass, wood, stone, or any other material. www.mtiwhirlpools.com.