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**Kitchen/Bath Spotlight**

Get inspired

The hottest trends in kitchen and bath

BY LINDA JENNINGS
Decorative plumbing specialist

This year’s design trends are more inspired than ever. The current economic conditions have created a new breed of consumers — no longer an impulse buy, there is much more thought going into home purchases. Those in a buying position are investing in products that address a wide array of needs, including emotional and physical well-being, sustainable living and innovation.

Informed consumers are visiting showrooms and retail outlets to achieve the newest looks in everything from tubs and faucets to sinks, decorative hardware and even shower systems. Today’s consumers are reinvesting in their homes and they continue to look for products that help them reach personal fulfillment.

Here’s a look at some of the hottest trends leading the kitchen and bath design craze. Highlighting the style network is the evolution of green products. As consumers get more sophisticated about sustainability, so do the products with a new wave of materials raising the bar on eco-friendly product design.

On the style front, retro is white hot with hardware, faucet finishes and tubs all going white for a 1970s throwback. Multi-generational design continues to be the fastest-growing bath trend, as more and more households need to equip for multiple generations. Hardware inspired by designers and seamless sink innovations are new to the design front with rave reviews. And showering just got more illuminating with LED lighted shower systems.

Following are some of the newest trends making headlines in plumbing.

**Trend #1 — Green evolves**

Sustainability is not a trend but a new way of living. More and more consumers are seeking ways to reduce negative impacts on the environment, and their product purchases are reflecting this thought. They are educated and very conscientious. But they also have impeccable taste and high design standards...so it’s no longer enough to just go “green.”

To keep up with the diverse offerings in the marketplace and the growing sophistication of the green buyer, manufacturers are shipping the baths in recycled cardboard on pallets made of reclaimed wood, with wrapping made from recycled bottles.

Other designers are reclaiming stainless steel and copper to craft freestanding bathing vessels and door pulls with fabulous high-end design results. Metal delivers superb quality and durability, guaranteeing no boundaries when it comes to design requirements. This allows engineering teams the flexibility of creating the most design-savvy products the market has to offer.

Even customizable bath furniture has gone stylish and is available in materials that minimize pollution, conserve energy and reduce waste. Sustainable woods like Clear Carmelized Bamboo, an architectural plywood made from 100% rapidly renewable bamboo, provide green options in cutting-edge vanity designs. Lyptus hardwood products are also an excellent option when selecting an exotic species grown to sustainable forest certification standards. Lyptus offers all the benefits of a tropical hardwood but is eco-friendly.

As concern for the earth has clearly become a key issue with consumers, designers are heeding the call. Some companies will even custom create door hardware on request to meet Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification standards, the rating system devised by the United States Green Building Council.

More and more products are being created from natural materials. Leather has made a huge comeback as renewable materials in organic forms fuse to create eco-friendly kitchen and bath products. Employing organic materials, quality construction and timeless design are keys to offering smart, ultra-luxe and green products that consumers are craving. Sustainable design is here to stay. It’s not a passing phase — it’s a revolution!

According to The American Society of Interior Design (ASID), “Clearly we are on our way toward adopting sustainability on all levels of our projects, our businesses, our lives — something is happening and it’s both an exciting and challenging opportunity for our industry. Individuals and business leaders are making decisions every day that support the economy and lighten their environmental footprint toward attaining sustainable results.”

The consumer has evolved when it comes to green living. And so manufacturers really have to raise the bar when it comes to design.

**Tracking down the trends**

For more information on the trends mentioned here go to:

Atlas Homewares 800-799-6755
www.atlashomewares.com

Diamond Spas 720-949-9189
www.diamondspas.com

Lenovo 877-733-1098
www.lenovaventsinks.com

MTI Whirlpools 800-783-8827
www.mtitrwhirlpools.com

Novellini 877-273-8816
www.novellini.com

Revel Designs 914-220-0277
www.reval-designs.com

Vogue UK 885-805-1975
www.vogue-uk.com.uk

Victoria + Albert 800-421-7189
www.vandabaths.com

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K/B trends change, but... Style never goes out of style

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It’s not enough to just be green — products have to be eco-licious!

**Trend #2 — Multi-generational bath design**

There’s no doubt that multi-generational design is one of the fastest-growing trends in today's housing industry. As more and more people discover the benefits that smart planning affords to those of all age groups and abilities, a rising demand is emerging for products that combine style and safety, beauty and comfort, practicality and versatility.

Multi-generational design need not be a foreign concept. It is, after all, what good design should be. Multi-generational design has applications throughout the house but is particularly important in the bathroom. A well-thought-out bathroom can easily accommodate the needs of young children, older adults and those with disabilities. While there are many practical considerations that play an important role in the design process — including safety, space constraints, comfort and ease of use — being “sensible” doesn’t mean the bathroom has to look utilitarian.

Quite the opposite, in fact. Manufacturers of bath products are now finding new ways to infuse style into what was once a strictly institutional area of bathroom design. The results are something style-savvy consumers would want to have in their home — even without the added bonus of multi-generational benefits. MTI Whirlpools leads the way with a line of bath products that open the door to accessibility. From low-profile shower bases to easy-entrance tubs, MTI has an extensive collection of products, accessories and options that allow all family members to enjoy a bathroom environment that looks great while being universally accommodating.

Industry insiders are gearing up to accommodate this trend, which is expected to increase exponentially over the next several decades. The oldest Baby Boomers will celebrate their 65th birthdays in 2011. According to government projections, by 2030 nearly 26% of the U.S. population will be age 65 or older, compared with just 17% today. This is creating a change in the profile of the typical American family. A survey from AARP reported that the number of multi-generational households has grown from 5 million in 2000 to 6.2 million in 2008. Nearly a quarter of baby boomers expect that their parents or in-laws will move in with them — and half of those who anticipate that living arrangement are excited about it. Experts predict that four-generation households will become more common as more baby boomers reach maturity and life expectancy increases. People are planning ahead now and looking for homes that will lend themselves to future demands of the multi-generational lifestyle.

**Trend #3 — Stainless in the spotlight**

The trend toward stainless steel for kitchens and baths is stronger than ever and products like Lenova's Entertainer Sink are taking center stage with innovative new features and a multi-tasking design style. The Entertainer bar/island sink features a drain board, wine cooler and three condiment trays that can be used for olives, a selection of nuts, sliced lemons or whatever you wish to serve. A two-piece cutting board covers the unit when not in use, providing additional counter space. The kitchen is the hub of the home and stainless products provide function and durability while making a modern statement. We're also seeing stainless kitchen and bath sinks evolve into a full range of shapes and styles, like the kidney-shaped sink and even a stainless steel apron-front farm sink for the ultimate in transitional style.

And when we talk about stainless, there is no doubt that less is more. Seamless drains are aesthetically superior, as they create a seamless modern look, but they also do away with the grime and eyesore of drains and glue. The new PermaClean drain system from Lenova has a streamlined modern look and an innovative drain design that provides a stylish and sanitary solution to the traditional kitchen sink. Disposer and drain seams disappear for a smooth and sanitary high-end look. No seams mean no dirty water or debris that breed bacteria. Drain kits become obsolete.

A fundamental shift in sink design, the PermaClean drain system features removable splashguards that are dishwasher safe, and strainer baskets that seal to both the drain fitting and the garbage disposer. The sink line complements any décor with premium 16-gauge 304 stainless and a light European brushed finish; fully undercoated plus quality sound pads combine to insulate and reduce excess noise and vibration.

**Trend #4 — Retro is white hot**

Bellbottoms and patent leather are so in vogue, and leading designers are finding a renewed interest in funky-kitsch designs of the '70s. Remember The Beatles' White Album and go-go boots? This groovy trend is spilling over to fixtures, faucets, sinks, tubs and toilets.

**Trend #5 — Partnering with designers**

The trend today is about infusing products with high style and so it's no surprise that some of the most successful companies are collaborating with leading architects and designers to inspire product design. And the results are electrifying. Matthew Quinn, one of the nation's leading designers in the luxury kitchen and bath design industry, and MTI Whirlpools recently embarked on a design partnership. The two have collaborated on the design and development of a new luxury collection of baths, sinks and bath furniture.

Reveal Designs also recently partnered with Quinn to design a new hardware line. Reveal and Quinn pair decades of experience and a strong national marketing and distribution campaign throughout U.S. and international markets. The partnership has added new dimension and perspective to the cutting-edge modern aesthetics of the Reveal Designs portfolio. The synergy of respected brands, common thinking and inspired design concepts allow for a continued fresh approach to architectural door and cabinet hardware designs.

**Trend #6 — Shed some light**

Creative forms of lighting have taken the spotlight from the most inspired manufacturers of bath products, the most trendy of which is LED. Why? Because LED (light-emitting diodes) brings fun, function (Turn to Hot new trends, page 46.)
Hot new trends

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and beauty to home decor. It's also economical, safe, maintenance-free and lasts for decades. Novellini's new Sparkle shower screen is elevating the bath experience to a level not before achieved in bath design. As a stand-alone shower screen with embedded LED blue lights, Sparkle lights up the shower experience. Part of the Elysium Collection, Sparkle is an eye-catching piece of art as well as a fully functional shower.

Trend #7 — Personal style!

The bath continues to evolve as a private refuge; an escape from the rigors of life's daily challenges. It's no wonder that homeowners are seeking to personalize this space to the max. Today it's all in the details! Bath accessories fill the bill and are at the forefront of cutting-edge design. Tub and bath shapes are getting more simplified while the accessories and amenities are evolving, raising moods and needs of the moment. So get inspired and check out a lifestyle of options that will wash away the stresses of everyday life.

Trend #8 — Bring on the glam!

It's all about glamour. Let's face it, with homeowners caught in the economic doldrums of recent years, more and more consumers are looking to create a major splash for a minimal investment. Many still desire a Hollywood home despite severe budget restrictions. Show them how to live like a movie star with a few minor touches. Add bling with striking stylish hardware. We all know that simply changing out knobs and pulls on tired cabinets can create an entirely new, luxurious and sensational look. Look for quality products without the high cost.

Trend #9 — Warm up bath design

Why settle for cold, damp towels when you can cuddle up with a soothing, warm towel after every shower or bath? Add a little luxury to your bath design with a towel warmer and keep your towels fresh and dry all year long. Not only will they be dry and warm when you use them, but they will also stay mildew free. The newest towel warmers on display today exceed expectations in quality and craftsmanship. These modern towel warmers are designed to create a light and open atmosphere in any modern home. Consumers are drawn to unique designs that feature flowing shapes, gentle curves or exotic flair that make the ultimate style statement.

Trend #10 — The future is clear

In an age when consumer confidence is low, the future is clear. It's all about being transparent! And that trend has transferred over to the luxury kitchen and bath market. We're seeing bath furniture crafted out of clear glass, vessel sinks hand blown out of glass that echo minimalism, and clear acrylic Lucite bath accessories that infuse a spirit of pure optimism!

Linda Jennings is president of Jennings & Company, a public relations, advertising and marketing agency, specializing exclusively in the decorative plumbing and luxury hardware industry. Throughout a 20-year tenure, she has worked with the most significant editors and journalists in the consumer home market, identifying trends and providing newsworthy products. Based in Sarasota, Fla., her agency represents some of the most progressive manufacturers in the kitchen & bath industry. Jennings is also a member of the DPHA and writes for their monthly Newsleture newsletter.