

# dwell

At Home in the Modern World

THE KITCHEN & BATH TEST  
We Tried Out New Products  
At Every Price Point

RADICAL RESTRAINT  
An L.A. Family's Home  
Leans Into Its Limitations

## THE MONEY ISSUE

Creativity

Compromise

And a Rare Look

At Real Budgets

dwell.com

March / April 2023  
Display until May 9, 2023

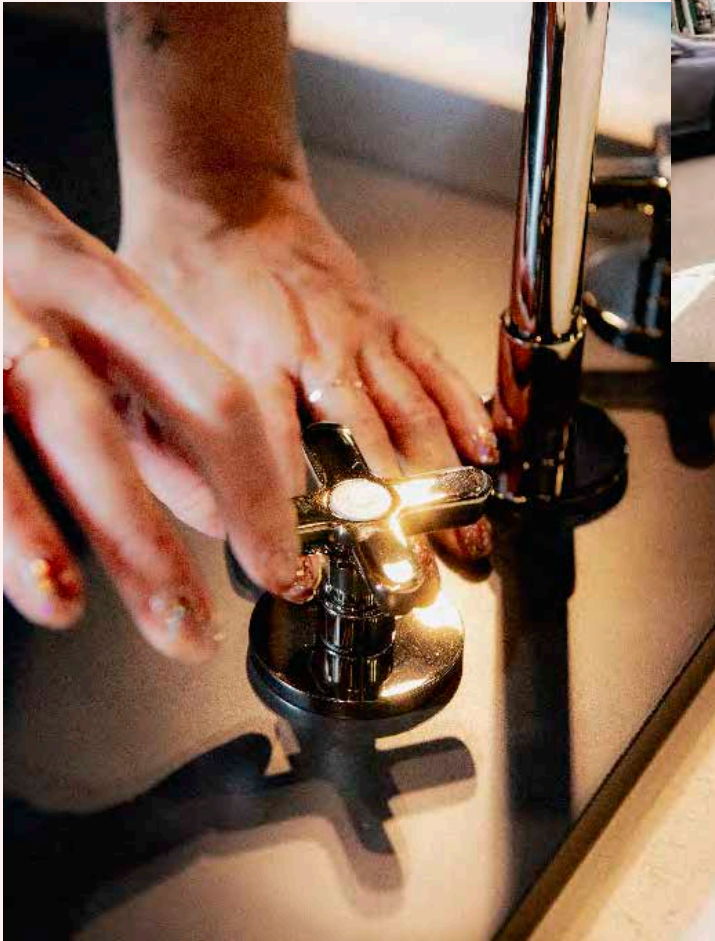


# Modern World

CURATED BY  
Sheila Kim

TEXT BY  
Megan Reynolds

PHOTOS BY | @JASONLECRAS  
Jason LeCras



## Shopping Around

Kitchens and bathrooms are the hardest-working rooms in the house—but Megan Reynolds, Dwell’s senior home guide editor, works harder. In service of anyone thinking of giving their spaces a refresh, she did the legwork and got hands-on with new products at every price point.





## induction burners

**Gas stoves are terrible for the environment** and, by extension, not great for humans. Prior to my visit to the Dacor showroom in Manhattan, I thought (despite my job) that an induction stove and an electric stove were one and the same. (An induction range creates heat via what seems like magic—electromagnetic waves warm up the cookware, making for an evenly heated pan and a faster cooking time all around.) Edouard Massih, owner and founder of Edy's Kitchen in Brooklyn, and Jillian Bartolome, a Los Angeles-based pastry chef, urged me to examine the following criteria in considering an induction cooktop: Are the burners of multiple sizes? Does the power display make it easy to adjust the temperature? And, most important, is it easy to use and clean?

In lieu of buttons, knobs, gaskets, and dials, the Dacor induction cooktop I tested (opposite) presents as a smooth rectangle of black glass with a simple panel in the front that controls the burners. The temperature of each burner is rated on a scale of 1 to 10, which means that, after a little trial and error, a savvy home cook can figure out what level heat is required to get a good sear on a steak or to boil water fast. Though I cannot speak to the former, watching the latter happen while testing the Dacor range was a revelation. A pot of water big enough to make a serving of instant ramen came to a roiling boil in what felt like seconds. Two eggs, scrambled in an unholy amount of butter, came together in under five minutes. The stove top itself was easy to clean—just some warm water on a micro-fiber rag got rid of the little blobs of egg left from my careless cracking. I remain a gas devotee only because it's what my rental provides, and at least for now, being able to adjust the flame presents the illusion of control. But if and when the opportunity arises, induction is the way for me.

PRODUCT PHOTOS: COURTESY THOR KITCHEN, BERTAZZONI, FULGOR MILANO



\$  
**Thor Kitchen Built-In 36" Induction Cooktop**  
(\$1,000)

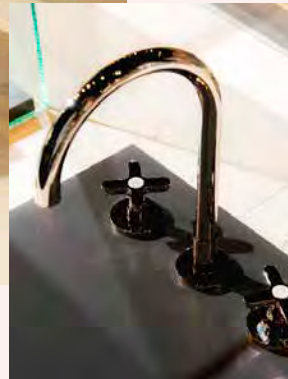


\$\$  
**Bertazzoni Induction With Integrated Hood**  
(\$5,200)



\$\$\$  
**Fulgor Milano 48" Sofia Pro Induction Range**  
With Griddle (\$14,000)





## faucets

If a faucet is doing its job, it looks great, but you're not really thinking about it when you use it, and if it's not, well, then there's a problem. Touchless faucets are having a moment, for practical and also sanitary reasons. (If your hands are covered in raw egg and meatloaf, it's much easier to just hover near the spigot to rinse off.) But there's something a little soulless about the touchless faucet: the automatization of a process that is both satisfying and simple foretells a future where everything we do will be automatic. Fantini Rubinetti's Icona Classic faucet, designed by Vincent Van Duysen, is not touchless but has an elegant curve to the spigot and a pleasing, almost vintage look to the individual taps. And the sink itself is a timeless design, so much so that it would fit into any space. The faucet is kept under glass at the Fantini showroom so as to highlight the fact that it's art as well as a utilitarian object that every home must have. At around \$3,215, it's certainly not the cheapest thing out there, but if you're looking for high design and practicality—and have a lot more money than I ever will—then this is for you.



**Moen** Cia Kitchen Faucet With MotionSense Wave (starting at \$700)



**Jason Wu for Brizo** SmartTouch Kitchen Faucet (\$1,000)



**Fantini Rubinetti** Icona Classic in Deep Black PVD (starting at \$3,215)



**Ruvati** Roma 32" Workstation Ledge Undermount Sink (\$399)



**Rejuvenation** Cannon Single Workstation Sink (\$719)



**House of Rohl** Culinario Sink (\$1,500)

PRODUCT PHOTOS: COURTESY MOEN, BRIZO, FANTINI RUBINETTI

PRODUCT PHOTOS: COURTESY RUVATI, REJUVENATION, HOUSE OF ROHL



## workstation sinks

Although a farmhouse sink, of the sort popularized by home renovation television and vintage enthusiasts alike, is still the status sink per HGTV, do not overlook the workstation sink, which is hot on its heels. Though I've never given much consideration to my sink unless it's not working, Dean Peterson, the man behind Sink Reviews on TikTok, which had 799,400 followers at press time, offered some criteria to consider when evaluating one: Is the sink generic, or are there unusual or beautiful features? Is it functional, and does it fit within the context of its surroundings? And, most important and controversial, are there separate faucets for hot and cold? (Peterson loves them and feels they are nonnegotiable.)

A workstation sink is intended to increase productivity, with many attachments and accessories. The sink I tested at Ferguson Kitchen and Bath's lovely and accommodating showroom (above) allowed me to rinse vegetables and then cut them, all without moving from my command station. The strainer attachment was by far the most useful, but the cutting board left a little to be desired: Because it was not flush to the edge of the sink, leaning over just slightly to cut the fennel and green pepper for my salad hurt my back.

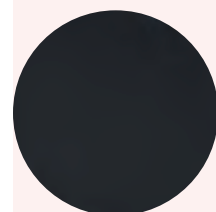
Despite these quibbles, a workstation sink has its perks. A small space could benefit from this sink's multipurpose nature, though I cannot imagine any average rental apartment going the extra mile to include anything other than the standard-issue metal. And while you can certainly replicate the feel of the real thing by purchasing any number of over-the-sink doodads meant to save space, the luxury of a workstation sink is that everything fits seamlessly.



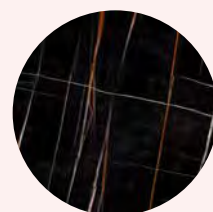
## countertops

Dark, sumptuous countertops are all the rage. And while black marbles and natural stone look lovely in the kitchen, there are less expensive options, too. In the outer reaches of Long Island, in a charming town called Bethpage, inside a cavernous warehouse, I gained a newfound appreciation for that much-maligned material: laminate. Much like tile, laminate is a versatile option that can be used everywhere, but it is especially prevalent in countertops. The trick with laminate is getting it to look expensive; thanks to the wonders of modern technology, it can appear to be marble, stone, wood, or a photo of your aunt Elizabeth—if you can print it, you can put it on laminate! For countertops that aren't natural stone, designer Hana Mattingly, of Innen Studio in San Francisco, urges simplicity. "Look out for one that is simple and doesn't have much obvious faux veining," she says. "Since it's not the real thing, it's better not to fake it, but to embrace more subtle patterns and colors."

Starting at \$3 a square foot, Wilsonart's Traceless line is a very affordable choice that both looks and feels expensive under the hand. To thoroughly test its smudge-proof claims, I pressed my sweaty palm against the soft black and watched in amazement as my greasy print disappeared right before my eyes. It's a neat party trick that stands as testament to the durability of the product, but also its claims. Spilling a glass of red wine on a creamy white slab of Calacatta is cause for agita, but doing so on a hulking length of laminate is no biggie. Refill your glass, wipe up the spill, and you're good to go.



**\$**  
**Wilsonart** Traceless Laminate Collection in Midnight Velvet (starts at \$3 to \$5 per square foot)



**\$\$**  
**Ava Sahara Noir** Ceramic Tile (starts at \$225 per square meter)



**\$\$\$**  
**Caesarstone** Pebbles Collection in Darkest Quartz (starts at \$125 per square foot, including installation)

PRODUCT PHOTOS: COURTESY WILSONART, CAESARSTONE, AVA



## bathroom lighting

Of all the places one might encounter hideously unflattering lighting, a restroom sits high atop the list. Bathroom lighting is historically awful—flickering fluorescent tubes or dingy yellow bulbs—but like most things in life, it doesn't have to be if you're willing to spend a little cash. The Punto Wall-Mount Mirror, which I viewed at Hastings Tile and Bath's showroom in Manhattan, is an elegant mirror with a built-in LED fixture with adjustable brightness that gave me a close look at various parts of my visage that have been otherwise obscured by the subpar lighting of my current apartment's bathroom. Innen Studio's Hana Mattingly recommends looking for a damp-rated, dimmable lighting

fixture that offers front-facing illumination. Punto's model did not disappoint; it was quite bright (but dimmable) and highlighted every pore, hair, and wrinkle, but not in the cold and clinical way a mirror with a ring light behind it might. It was both humbling and sobering to consider myself this closely, but I'm grateful for the experience, since it gave me the chance to pluck an errant nose hair that had been evading my grasp (and also to contemplate Botox in a serious way).

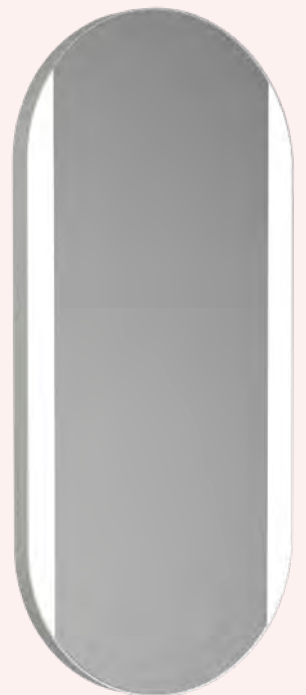
While I won't be springing for cosmetic surgery at any point in the near future, I learned that good lighting really does make a difference—and if you can find it at any price, why not?



**\$**  
**Sonneman** Fino LED Bath Bar (starts at \$380)



**\$\$**  
**Hudson Valley Lighting** Starkey (\$1,070)



**\$\$\$**  
**Hastings Tile & Bath** Punto Wall-Mount Mirror With Integrated Lighting and Sensor Switch (\$1,760)

PRODUCT PHOTOS: COURTESY SONNEMAN, HUDSON VALLEY LIGHTING, HASTINGS TILE & BATH





## bidet seats

**No longer relegated to European hotels,** the bidet is a fantastic solution to the age-old problem of how best to tend to your undercarriage after the deeds are done. Companies like Tushy have democratized bidets, offering the basic functionality at a reasonable price, but if you're going to have a bidet, it might as well do everything and a little more.

While there are other, less expensive products on the market, the first name in luxury toilet experiences is Toto. Before visiting the brand's Manhattan showroom, I'd only heard of the legend of Toto: *RuPaul's Drag Race* icon Detox splurged on a Toto Neorest for her home, and Drake gave DJ Khaled four of the same for his birthday. In person, the Neorest is, I'm sorry, gorgeous—a big boy, to be sure, but kitted out with the attendant bells and whistles that one comes to expect from luxury models. (While I was unable to test out a Neorest for myself, I am still in its thrall and will be for some time.)

The Toto Washlet, on the other hand, is still an experience, elevating the simple act of using the restroom to a bit of a spa moment. The seat, which is constantly warm, lifts and closes automatically, while a handy remote control provides a variety of options for below-the-belt maintenance once your business is finished. The initial burst of warm water on the nethers took this writer by surprise, but the drying function—a gentle breeze of warm air for as long as you want—is something that I now cannot live without.

PRODUCT PHOTOS: COURTESY BEMIS, BRONDELL, TOTO

PRODUCT PHOTOS: COURTESY HAI, KOHLER, THERMASOL



**\$**  
Brondell Swash Thinline Bidet Seat (\$700)

**\$\$**  
Bemis Sanctuary 5000 Smart Bidet Toilet (\$2,000)

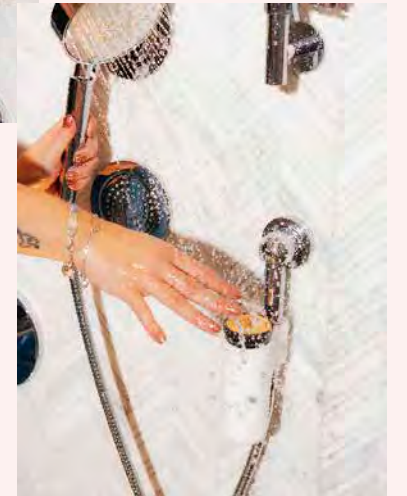
**\$\$\$**  
Toto Washlet G450 Smart Toilet (\$4,100)

## infusion showerheads

**The new thing in shower innovations is** experience—a shower is a shower, but wouldn't it be more fun if your particular shower were an experience that replicated some of the amenities a spa provides? Hai's signature product is a fairly standard but elegantly designed showerhead with an infusion attachment. Setting up the showerhead sent to my home was easy enough for me, a woman who would rather outsource most of her tasks to someone else. It provides the options for a hard stream or a more gentle mist, and the Bluetooth connectivity, which allows users to monitor water flow, among other things, from their phones is a gimmick rather than a necessity, though I suppose it was useful to see that if I treat myself to a 15-minute shower, I'm using far too much water for it to be sustainable. Scentwise, the infusion pods didn't do much more than a fresh bundle of eucalyptus strung to my showerhead with a rubber band would. But the pods don't leave as much of a mess as dried leaves do, and at \$30 for a box of 16 tablets, they're slightly more cost-effective.

Kohler's offering, the Sprig, works similarly to Hai's, with pods that attach to the unit and infuse the stream with scent. And the Kohler showroom has an experience

room where you can test any of the company's hardware by actually taking a shower. While I wish I'd booked the whole enchilada, I was content to repeatedly wash my hands like a raccoon in the gentle yet powerful stream of a showerhead while the bergamot and lemongrass scent of the Recharge pod (which you must continually repurchase, like printer ink) filled the wet room.



**\$**  
Hai Fuse Attachment and Pods (\$49 for attachment; \$30 for pack of 16 pods)



**\$\$**  
Kohler Sprig Infusion System + Pods (system starts at \$150; pods start at \$9)



**\$\$\$**  
ThermaSol HydroVive 14 Steam Shower With Chromotherapy (\$6,490)





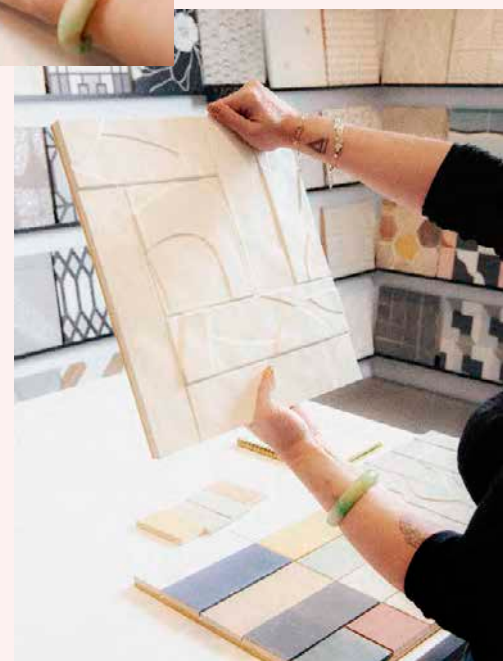


## tile

**Tile feels like the most important of all the finishes** in a kitchen or bathroom. It communicates personality and verve and is a measure of an individual's taste, good or bad. Parsing aesthetic choices in this category is pointless, since it is truly a matter of what you like, but in terms of practicality, utility, and function, there are some things to keep an eye out for, according to Innen Studio's Hana Mattingly: Does the tile have finished edge pieces? Is it sealed and therefore nonporous? And, for ease of installation, can it be mounted to a larger, eight-by-eight board?

At the Ann Sacks showroom, a truly dizzying array of tile covered the walls, but I only had eyes for Kohler's WasteLab offerings, which are practical, beautiful, and good for the environment. (They're made from products left over from the manufacturing process.) Thankfully, the options for color and texture were subtle yet distinctive, but what I really wanted was practicality. WasteLab ticked all the boxes Mattingly listed while also meeting one of my requirements for being easy to clean.

A bright smear of curry paste on a tile wiped away like a dream and, miraculously, didn't stain. Underhand, the tile felt cool and quietly expensive, artisanal but muted enough to suit any decor—a fabulous selection for the apartment I wish to renovate in the future. ■



Ⓢ  
**Block Shop x Fireclay Tile**  
(starting at \$40 per square foot)



ⓈⓈ  
**Kohler WasteLab Abstra**  
(\$50 to \$80 per square foot)



ⓈⓈⓈ  
**New Ravenna Heritage Collection**  
in Memphis Raku (\$198 per square foot)

PRODUCT PHOTOS: COURTESY FIRECLAY TILE, KOHLER, NEW RAVENNA