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SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN | NOVEMBER 2009

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# I LOVE MY KITCHEN

By Rebecca Roe

For many families, the kitchen is one of the most important rooms in the house. In addition to being a place to prepare meals, kitchens have become gathering places for family and friends.

Whether you're building or remodeling, there are many ways to add color and style to this key space.

Homeowners have always put an emphasis on their kitchens, says Daryl Ann Letts, a certified kitchen designer and owner of Kalamazoo Custom Kitchens in Kalamazoo. "That is really where everybody spends so much time," she says, "and more so these days because people are staying home more and putting more luxury items into the home."

Working with clients on a kitchen can be rewarding and enjoyable because you get the opportunity to have a big impact on a family's life for the future, Letts says.

Many homeowners are looking to be "green" in some way.

"They want to be conserving their carbon footprint, so to speak, and some of them are now going toward the contemporary styling instead of traditional," she says.

Michigan is a little slower to catch on to trends than the East and West Coasts, she says, but those looks are finally getting here and leaning toward the contemporary.

"The kitchen is now turned into a focus of art design," Letts says. "It has become ... very artistic, so that we feel uplifted and regenerated in this room that we are spending so much time cooking in and spending time with family."

Stainless steel appliances are mainstays in contemporary kitchens, Letts says. Cabiners that have lift-up doors, stainless steel frames and frosted glass mixed in with other wood cabinets can also be found in modern kitchens.

sam zomer/correspondent

Varying widths and heights give funky flair to these designs at Kalamazoo Custom Kitchens.



Contemporary pantries are approximately 6-foot-tall units that feature stainless steel frames with glass panels, Letts says. "They are backlit so that you can see what's in your pantry before you even open the door, but you can turn the light off and not have to look at all the boxes."

Modern kitchen countertops are not only available in various materials, but various thicknesses as well.

"So you might have a countertop that's two inches thick, you might have (one) that's an inch-and-a-half or one that's only three-quarters-of-an-inch thick," she says. "And that in itself can be lots of fun and inventive for making an art stage or an artistic statement and become a palette of color and design ... things are changing."

There are a lot of interesting options for kitchens now, agrees Kim Gardner, showroom consultant at Infusions Show room by Etna Supply in Kalamazoo.

Oil-rubbed bronze faucets are popular, as are tall gooseneck pull-out faucets,

and cement countertops are a growing trend, Gardner says. Not in the least bit similar to a cement sidewalk, cement countertops are generally about two to three inches thick and come in colors like brown, blue and dark slate gray.

"They actually put a lot of fleck in it, they will put reflective glass inside there, they actually put quite a few items in," Gardner says. "It looks beautiful, it really does." Cement countertops offer a unique look as well as a sterile surface, she adds.

Natural stone kitchen countertops made from a material like granite are also popular and available in a variety of colors and styles.

Bar sinks are making their way into many kitchens these days. Some people like to use them strictly for cleaning vegetables and preparing food instead of washing dishes, Gardner says. These even come in a number of custom shapes.