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Auto-Faucets & Euro-Cabinets

Kitchen Trends for '87

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by Patrick J. Galvin

Good kitchens sell houses faster and at better prices. This is a truism home builders have discovered applies equally to luxury and economy models.

Builders who believe that concept can find a lot of new products to enhance their kitchens for the coming year. While some of these were first promoted in 1986 or before, many still are unknown to builders and consumers. Also, many are just becoming available in the marketplace since production often lags behind a product's official introduction.

The Latest Gadgets

Some home buyers are excited by the newest, most advanced products. They can now save energy or water with the new electronic dishwasher cycles (any brand), or the new and different refrigerators such as those by Defiance or imported by Admiral. They can get simplified plumbing hookup with an AEG dishwasher that heats its own water so it can be fed with a cold-water line.

A host of colors are available in various new faucet brands. Faucets have also gone high-tech. The Cue-Tel turns itself on when its electric eye reads the presence of a hand or a pan. American Standard's Ceramix has a solar-powered readout that tells the water temperature. (That solar power, incidentally, need not be direct sunlight. Like a solar calculator, it works on ambient light in the room.)

Cabinets Change, Too

Kitchen cabinetry has changed in many subtle ways. European cabinets had been identifiable by their square boxiness, flush styling, and frameless construction.

But now, the two top German cabinet names, Poggenpohl and Allmilmo, offer curved and angled cabinets to varying depths to add to their furniture look. Outwater Industries offers Europa wood trim ready to apply to those square edges and corners to soften them.

For more modern houses, builders can get the Euro-style look in many U.S.-made brands. Many U.S. manufacturers now offer frameless cabinets with European hinges that are six-way adjustable.

Other hardware changes are more subtle because they are less visible. Drawer slides, for instance, have been



Euro-style built-in refrigerators and freezers are imported from Italy by Admiral. Most European appliances have less capacity than U.S. brands.

improved with captive wheels that prevent side movement when the drawers are pulled out.

More visible are the interior fittings, or accessories, that used to be built in but now can be added. These include all kinds of pullout bins and shelves, mainly of an epoxy-coated wire construction. Introduced by Amerock, they now are offered by several hardware manufacturers. While Amerock

medium to high price. A separate down-draft ventilation installed in a countertop and used to vent any range is offered by Stewart Manufacturing.

Although some builders question the use of down-draft, the fact is that some buyers like it. In other cases, architectural constraints prohibit the use of exterior wall caps on a condo unit or house. That would leave the buyers stuck with non-ducted ventilation unless the build-

product categories. Most will be from West Germany, Italy, and France, with others from Scandinavia, but the U.S. market is becoming attractive to all European and Asiatic manufacturers.

For the most part, these products will be more expensive than U.S. equivalents, although many of our top names now are foreign-owned.

Foreign brands exert a certain snob appeal which—let's face it—some home buyers like. But builders should investigate before buying.

Most U.S. manufacturers now offer Euro-style in either framed or frameless construction. The U.S.-made cabinets faced with decorative laminate are not only less expensive, but in some ways superior to foreign-made. They are finished with laid-up sheets of laminate, which are more durable and less subject to chipping.

European appliances such as AEG, Miele, and Gaggenau are top quality, but are priced to match. Also, their capacities might be too small for U.S. shoppers who load up on groceries once a week. The "European look" is no longer a fact in ranges, because U.S. range makers now buy burners from Europe for the European look.

Sinks and faucets by Franke, Luwa, Kroin, Dornbracht or Benthor-Sanjura (and at least a dozen others) are of top

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offers an entire family of such fittings, a smaller firm, Feeny, has many specialty products engineered for both framed and frameless cabinets.

The advantage of these add-on fittings is that they can be shown in model homes, but offered as options. They can be installed by the builder or the buyer. These fittings make a kitchen truly convenient.

Add-On Specialties

Many specialty products are available that change or upgrade established appliances.

For example, Jenn Air now offers the newest method of cooking—magnetic induction—as a cartridge that plugs into any of their ranges. A builder can offer the feature without displaying the range. The cartridge is not cheap. But the capability to upgrade the range is marketable.

Jenn Air, which pioneered down-draft ventilation, now has competition from Thermador, Modern Maid, Tappan, and others. They offer down-draft ventilation in models from upper-

er installed down-draft, which can be ducted down through the kitchen floor and out a basement window.

Domestic or Foreign?

For 1987, builders will find increasing numbers of foreign brands in many



Diagonal cabinets to varying depths tend to counter the "squareness" that has marked European cabinets. This is the 2200 series by Poggenpohl.

Contenders to Corian

Builders can choose from a wider range of materials for their kitchens and bathrooms in 1987.

Some of these are competitors to established names, and at least one—Avonite—is entirely new.

The new competitors are challengers to DuPont's Corian, which

wiped off.

Corian's new competitors claim these same qualities.

But exactly what are the new materials? Other than "some kind of acrylic monomer," nobody knows. (Even DuPont execs who market the stuff have never been



2000X is new Formica product that appears very similar to DuPont's Corian. It is offered in three stock colors, three custom colors.

has been singular in the marketplace for more than a dozen years. They include Formica 2000X and Silky Marble, the latter developed by Nippoly Kako of Japan.

These materials might be classified as cultured marbles. Cultured marbles have changed enough in the last few years so they can be "worked" to some extent. They now can be drilled for faucet holes, an end can be cut to fit tight quarters, and some (but not all) manufacturers claim they are repairable.

But Corian and its challengers are different from true cultured marbles. Corian enjoys its lofty status because, while looking like marble, it is fully workable with

allowed in the plant.) The materials all have good compressive strength, limited tensile strength, excellent stain resistance and cleanability, and are super for bath or kitchen counters and walls.

They are homogeneous, whereas the cultured marbles still are finished with a gel coat. But the cultured-marble upgrade, cultured onyx, continues to have one big advantage—translucency—so it can be used for lighted panels.

The new material, Avonite, is even more mysterious. It seems to be almost infinitely variable. We have seen it simulating wood, Corian, and glass.

Avonite was on display at this

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woodworking tools. This feature has made Corian widely accepted for bath and kitchen applications, and for other, imaginative uses such as picture frames and bathroom accessories.

Corian is not abrasion-resistant, but scratches or nicks can be repaired by rubbing with a Scotch-brite pad. Similarly, any stain, as from a burning cigarette, can be

year's NAHB and kitchen shows as a solid material and also as a highly polished transparent veneer over wood. It also can be worked with woodworking tools.

Avonite is located at 12836 Arroyo St., Sylmar, CA 91342. Nippoly Kako has a U.S. office at 209 Post St., Suite 1111, San Francisco, CA 94108. ■

—Patrick J. Galvin

quality. But so are many U.S. brands, and you have to buy those to get a Moen "Riser" faucet, which pulls up several inches to accommodate a high pot, the Cue-Tel faucet, which turns itself on and off, or the Ceramix, which tells water temperature.

So what constitutes a modern kitchen in the '80s is a matter of choice, but it should be an informed choice. And price is rarely the main criterion. ■

Patrick J. Galvin is the author of Kitchen Planning Guide for Builders, Designers and Architects and the former editor and publisher of Kitchen & Bath Business.