

The Kitchen Hearth

Kitchens by Rodale Press, Emmaus, Pa.; 1986; 147 pages; \$12.95 paperback, \$19.95 hardcover.

Baths also by Rodale, 1986; 148 pages: \$12.95 paperback, \$19.95 hardcover.

by Paul Hanke



The premise of the *Kitchens* volume in Rodale's *Home Design Series* is that the "hearth" is not just a fireplace (or a room with one in it), but a focal point for the life of the occupants. This once-common nucleus, says the book's editors, has all but vanished from the contemporary American scene. *Kitchens*, the authors promise, is about "how to turn your kitchen into a hearth room."

Practically speaking, this means designing a multipurpose kitchen/Great Room that can draw the family together again. But despite its being a fine offering on kitchen planning and design, I think the book fails to follow through on its hearth transformation perspective as promised.

In a modern vein the book's introduction briefly sketches current trends such as chic Euro-cabinets, use of color, energy-efficient appliances, wood flooring, clerestories, and skylights.

The rest of the book, which contains 173 photos (many in color), consists of a section each on planning; selecting cabinets and countertops; appliances; wall, floor, and, ceiling materials; a "gallery" of 22 kitchen designs; and an appendix

The hearth has all but vanished from the contemporary American scene, but you can design a kitchen that will be a focal point for the life of those who use it.

listing useful sources. The planning section begins with programming questions by Beverly Wilson of the Owner Builder Center in Berkeley, California, followed by a quick overview of layouts, work triangles, and making as-built drawings. This material is supplemented by a final workbook section, which includes detailed information on cabinet sizes, using an architect's scale, and childproofing a kitchen. In addition, a token page is devoted to handicapped design.

The chapter on cabinets and countertops will open your eyes to types, styles, and sizes, as well as how to tell Euro from American cabinets, accessories, state-of-the-art laminates, the pros and cons of countertop choices, islands, and peninsulas. The thorny question of how to vent island plumbing, however, is ignored.

True to the tradition of Rodale Press, which after all began by publishing "Organic Gardening" magazine, this chapter closes with an introduction to water filters and testing for the health—or litigation—conscious designer or builder.

The appliance chapter will bring you up to speed on panelled appliances, energy labeling, piezzo ignition, German "Aga" cast iron cookers, a Toshiba refrigerator which saves energy through a manually automated defrost cycle, and of course, the latest in Gaggenau and sub-zero appliances for the upscale set. Here again the editors' environmental concerns are evident in their discussion of strategies for controlling indoor air pollution.

The material on walls, ceilings and floors is more-or-less limited to finish materials, and includes no details or how-to instructions.

The gallery section compares favorably to *Sunset* and similar idea books, including a nifty monochromatic Euro-style kitchen in "Fiesta Bisque" (where do they get these color names?), an Art-Deco styled kitchen for two natural food buffs, and the tiny but very sculptural Calella kitchen. Among the 22 examples presented, perhaps the closest to "hearth" rooms are the "Living Hall" by Jeremiah Eck and the Fuller kitchen. But in general the plans and examples seemed to miss the mark in this respect.

Besides not making a strong enough connection between their main premise and the book's text and examples, the book is also limited by its homeowner orientation and remodeling focus. Furthermore the remodeling projects are usually not documented by before and after illustrations. Nonetheless, while *Kitchens* may not replace Rodale's previous *Harvest Kitchen* as a comprehensive treatment of all aspects of kitchen design and construction, it is a fine contribution, and a great idea book to share with clients.

Baths is a companion volume in the series, and like *Kitchens* it begins with a premise. If kitchens are the new focal point of family life, today's bathrooms provide a complementary private hide-away. They are, in the words of the editors, "places in which to wash away the cares of today's recklessly fast-paced world and to get in touch with body and spirit again." (Remember when we used to go to church for the latter?) In short, bathrooms provide "quality space for quality time."

What's new in baths? Space for one thing. Today's baths, according to the editors, are double the size of their standardized 5x7-foot predecessors. Traditional materials are being used in new ways—mirrored walls to visually expand space, for example. And there are Euro-baths, whirlpools, exercise equipment, tankless water heaters, radiant ceilings, low-flow shower heads, and

other accessories for modern living.

There are also different kinds of baths. The Master Bath heads the list, including perhaps a sunspace or a media center to "keep occupants in touch with the outside world while they're enjoying some private time."

(Just think, you won't have to miss a moment of the Iran-Contra hearings on tv while you and your mate indulge in a joint bubble bath). To round out the design you can add heated towel bars or even a "scaled-down refrigerator," presumably for a cool drink if your towel is too hot.

"Bodyrooms" are personal fitness centers—with everything but a trainer. The "family bath" (another hearth room?) uses separate compartments and double lavs to handle "high-volume" traffic (despite today's declining family sizes). And don't forget the kid's bath, basement and garage baths, hot tubs, spas, or handicapped access.

To translate all these ideas into reality the editors of *Baths* have followed the same format as *Kitchens*. Opening with a chapter on programming (renew, replace, or redesign?), they proceed to the nuts-and-bolts of fixtures, storage, detailing, and layout. They end with another gallery, a practical workbook

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chapter, and a list of helpful addresses.

Fixtures include color-coordinated efforts from teams such as American Standard and American Olean Tile Co. There are also low-flush toilets, bidets, sinks and tubs. Sinks range from hammered copper and Corian, to—can you believe it—gold and platinum. Tubs go from humble whirlpools to the "ultimate soak"—a Bathwomb by Water Jet or Sensorium, by American Standard, retailing at \$11,000 and \$25,000 respectively. You get "soaked" by buying one.

The chapter on storage gives down-to-earth consideration to cabinetry, countertops, and accessories, while "Finishing Touches" covers walls, floors, lighting, exhaust fans, decorative accents, and even plant care. In keeping with the spirit of the book, the gallery features 30 bath examples including a solid brass tub spigot in the shape of a swan taking flight. Fortunately, they include a selection of well-designed small baths as well.

Despite my tongue-in-cheek comments, *Baths* shares graphic excellence with *Kitchens*, and is another fine, (if slightly high-falutin), idea and design reference. ■

—Paul Hanke

FREE & CHEAP

Tile Countertops: *How to Install Ceramic Tile Counter Tops*, contains step-by-step discussions and photos of the most common ways to install ceramic tile on countertops. The booklet is available free from American Olean, Lansdale, PA 19446.

House Ventilation: *The Home Ventilating Guide*, based on recommendations of the Home Ventilating Institute Division of the Air Movement and Control Association, Inc. helps you evaluate, select, and install home ventilating systems. A directory of Certified Home Ventilation Products is also available. Request publications No. 12 and 11 from HVI, 30 West University Drive, Arlington Heights, IL 60004.

Fire Protection: An annual *Fire Protection Reference Directory* includes a listing of products and services for the fire-protection industry, and is available for \$16 from National Fire Protection Association Membership, Batterymarch Park, Quincy, MA 02269; 800/344-3555.

Barrier-Free Deductions: Two free booklets assist builders and designers who wish to take advantage of Section 190 of the 1986 Tax Reform Act, which relates to deductions for designing/building in accessibility for handicapped persons. For copies of *The Tax Advantages of Section 190 and Design Guidelines Qualifying for the Tax Deduction of Section 190*, write to Paralyzed Veterans of America, 801 18th St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006.

Laminate Video: Those wishing to work with Solicor, a new color-core laminate available from Ralph Wilson Plastics Co., will find hands-on instructions in a video and manual available from the company. Available free to fabricators and do-it-yourselfers when you call 800/433-3222.

Bath School: *Bath Designer School*, from the National Kitchen & Bath Association, provides dates, info and registration forms for beginner and intermediate courses in bathroom design, as well as business management and contemporary salesmanship. Contact NKBA, 124 Main St, Hackettstown, NJ 07840; 201/852-0033.

Fire Walls: *How to Install the U.S. Gypsum Area Separation Wall*, uses photos and step-by-step instructions to help construction crews install the walls. For copies contact U.S. Gypsum, Dept 122-ZZ, 101 S. Wacker, Chicago, IL 60606.

Accessible Kitchens: *Basic Kitchen Planning for Handicapped People* provides easy-to-read plans for barrier-free kitchen design and is available free from General Electric Corporation, 101 Prestige Park Rd., East Hartford, CT 06108.