

Kitchen & Bath | Cooking | by Scott Gibson



Out of Sight. Standard kitchen layouts typically include a microwave oven mounted either over the range or below an upper cabinet. Where else can you put this common but bulky appliance? Sharp Electronics offers another option: in a drawer. *Microwave Drawers* come in 24- and 30-inch-wide models that can be built into standard lower cabinets. Both draw 1,000 watts and boast a one-cubic-foot capacity, which is large enough to hold a 9-inch-by-13-inch dish. Stand-alone models list for \$850. Combined with a ceramic cooktop, the drawer lists for \$1,700 to \$1,800, depending on finish.

Sharp Electronics Corp., 800/237-4277, www.sharppusa.com.
Circle #1

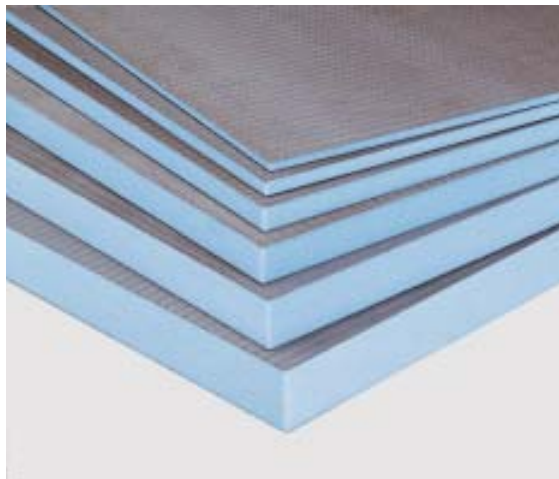
Space-Saver. Downsizing means smaller houses and smaller kitchens — which puts an even greater premium on counter space. If you're trying to squeeze the most out of a really tiny kitchen design, check out the line of *flip-up cooktops* from Alpes. When they're not needed, these appliances flip up out of the way so that the counter can be used for other tasks. Several gas models are available (though the manufacturer is still awaiting UL approval); at \$1,870, the two-burner unit (shown) is the most popular.

Alpes, 718/786-1234, www.alpesusa.com. **Circle #2**



Hot and Healthy. Cooking with steam no longer requires lugging a pot of water to the stove. Gaggenau's steam cooker can be installed right in the countertop. It comes in 15-inch-wide (*VK411*) and 12-inch-wide (*VK230*) models. Both deliver steam without pressure to cook vegetables, shellfish, meat, and rice; Gaggenau says this process allows food to retain more of its nutrients. Cookers can be connected directly to a drain for convenience. The VK411 costs \$1,960; the VK230, \$1,730.

Gaggenau, 800/828-9165, www.gaggenau-usa.com.
Circle #3



Warm and Dry. Conventional tile backerboard may be just fine most of the time, but when you're looking for a waterproof panel that also insulates, consider Wedi's *foam building panels*. Lightweight and German-made, they consist of a core of extruded polystyrene reinforced with fiberglass and a cementitious coating. Available in several thicknesses, the panels are completely waterproof and have an R-value of 4.3 per inch. The company says they also help to suppress cracks in large tile installations. Special prescored panels can be used for curved tile surfaces. A 1/2-inch panel lists for about \$2.30 per square foot.

Wedi Corp., 770/366-6835 (916/387-8500 on the West Coast), www.wedicorp.com. **Circle #4**

Down in a Flash. Looking to speed up your next tile job? Consider *EasyMat*, an underlayment available in a peel-and-stick version that goes down quickly, can be cut with a utility knife, and is much lighter than standard cement board. The maker says the crack-suppressing substrate is suitable for both tile and stone floors. It won't absorb water, resists mold and mildew, and helps attenuate sound. EasyMat comes in 4-foot-wide rolls and in three thicknesses — 3 mm, 5 mm, and 12 mm (or slightly under 1/8 inch, 1/4 inch, and 1/2 inch). The 5-mm peel-and-stick costs between \$1.30 and \$1.70 per square foot.

Custom Building Products, 800/272-8786, www.custombuildingproducts.com. **Circle #5**



Crack Protection. Bonsal B-6000 waterproofing membrane now meets ANSI requirements for crack isolation. It can be applied by brush, trowel, roller, or airless sprayer over a variety of materials, including dry concrete and plywood. According to the manufacturer, the membrane restricts the growth of mold and mildew when applied beneath tile. The company also says the product dries quickly and can usually be tiled over in about four hours. Bonsal B-6000 is premixed and comes in one-gallon and 3 1/2-gallon containers. It costs about \$45 per gallon.

Bonsal American, 800/738-1621, www.bonsal.com. **Circle #6**