

Kitchen & Bath Show Roundup

Problem-solving products
from KBIS 2012

by Bruce Greenlaw

When times get tough, think kitchens and baths. That's what many builders and remodelers are doing, and that's why *JLC* decided to visit the latest Kitchen & Bath Industry Show, held this April in Chicago. The annual event — which is owned by the National Kitchen & Bath Association — drew 32,000 attendees and featured 550 exhibitors, from solo entrepreneurs displaying single prototypes to mega manufacturers showcasing soft-close cabinets, vitamin-saving ovens, automatic bath fans, chic surfaces, and much more. The biggest surprise? The show offered a wealth of practical solutions for builders and remodelers, including hardware and fixtures that are easier to install than their predecessors, quick cabinet upgrades, and toilets for tight spaces. On the following pages are some of our favorite products, with some fancier items thrown in for good measure.

SPACE SAVER

If you need to fit a toilet into a tight space, consider a wall-hung model. Its tank and carrier frame fit inside the wall, saving about 9 inches of floor space (compared to a standard floor-mounted toilet). Geberit's concealed tanks and carrier frames have standard plumbing connections, fit into 2x4 or 2x6 walls, work with wall-hung toilets made by a variety of manufacturers, and allow you to set the seat at 15 to 19 inches high. Actuator flush plates provide push-button flushing and tool-free access to all working parts. The tank-and-carrier units cost \$500 to \$630, and the actuator flush panels \$80 to \$540. Wall-hung toilets typically cost \$300 to \$800 (though some cost over \$3,000).

Geberit, 800/566-2100, geberit.us.





LINEAR DRAINS

Linear drains allow shower floors to slope in one direction, so you can install large-format tiles and — if desired — eliminate the curb for a contemporary, barrier-free design. Noble's *FreeStyle* linear drains are made of PVC or ABS and include a choice of four brushed stainless-steel strainers. They're 2 to 6 feet long and clamp to your waterproof membrane to prevent leaks. The standard kit is designed for thin-bed installations, but Nobel says it's about to introduce an adapter for mortar beds. The PVC version costs \$460 to \$880, the ABS version about 10 percent more. The mortar-bed adapter will cost about \$65.

Noble Co., 800/878-5788, noblecompany.com.



FLEXIBLE CABLE DRAINS

Kohler's new *PureFlo* universal cable drains have a flexible neck that should make them easy to install regardless of the bath-wall slope. They come with a 30- or 45-inch cable to accommodate bathtubs 14 to 26 inches deep, and accept seven different trim kits offering either rotary-turn or push-button actuation and a variety of styles and finishes. For a change of pace, homeowners can easily change the appearance or the actuation method from the surface of the tub. The drains cost \$70 to \$210, and the trim kits \$55 to \$165.

Kohler, 800/456-4537, us.kohler.com.



VERSATILE HINGES

The *Tiomos* hinge collection can handle almost any application in frameless and face-frame cabinets with full-overlay, overlay, half-overlay, or inset doors, regardless of the size or weight of the doors. The hinges come in a self-close version or with a soft-close mechanism that's concealed in the hinge arm and adjusts for three levels of closing action. They're supposed to be easier to adjust than most hinges, which should help to minimize gaps. Prices start at \$4 apiece.

Grass America, 800/334-3512, grassusa.com.



ONE GALLON PER FLUSH

According to Toto, its new two-piece ADA-compliant *1G* toilet is the first gravity-fed model to use just one gallon of water per flush. This is possible, the company says, because of the toilet's dual-nozzle Double Cyclone flushing system. The toilet costs about \$600.

Toto USA, 888/295-8134, totousa.com.

LABOR-SAVING GROUT SEAL

Instead of water, mix DuPont's *StoneTech Professional Stain Protecting Grout Additive* with your sanded or unsanded cement-based grout to eliminate the extra step of sealing the grout after it cures. The additive won't affect the grout color, the company says. A 27-ounce bottle costs about \$25, a 67-ounce bottle about \$50.

DuPont StoneTech Professional, 877/786-6383, stonetechpro.com.

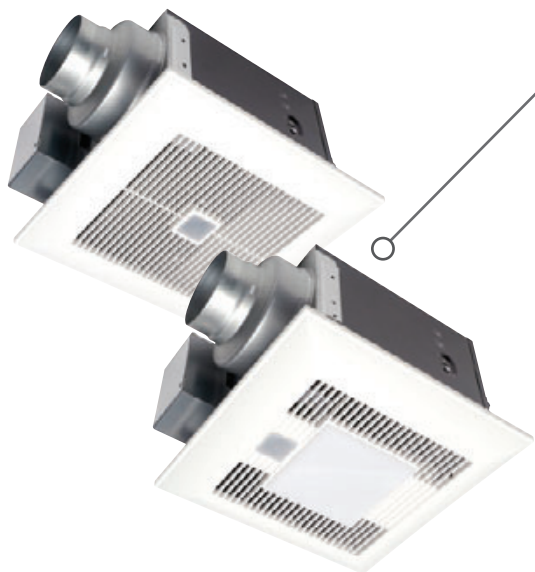


FLOWS UPHILL

Putting a bathroom in a basement? One option is to install a macerating toilet. Liberty Pump's new ADA-compliant *Ascent II* model uses replaceable utility-knife blades to liquefy waste, mixes in flushing water, and then pumps the fine slurry up to 25 feet vertically and 150 feet horizontally to a sewer or a septic tank. The macerator can simultaneously accept wastewater from several other fixtures (such as a sink, shower, and bathtub). An alarm announces trouble, and an access panel makes it possible to service the macerator without removing it from the toilet. Prices are \$1,130 for a round-front toilet and \$1,180 for an elongated toilet.

Liberty Pumps, 800/543-2550, libertypumps.com.





SENSITIVE BATH FANS

Panasonic's 80-cfm and 110-cfm *WhisperSense* and *WhisperSense-Lite* bath fans are the only ones on the market that respond to both motion and humidity, says the maker. The motion sensor activates the fan when anyone enters the bathroom, and turns it off after the person exits — unless someone takes a shower or bath, in which case the humidity sensor takes over and keeps the fan on until the humidity drops to the desired level. (A built-in delay timer can be used to keep the fan running for up to an hour extra.) The fan connects to 4-inch or 6-inch ducts with no additional adapters required. WhisperSense-Lite models add a 32-watt CFL and a night light. Prices range from \$330 to \$475.

Panasonic Eco Solutions, 866/292-7292, panasonic.com/ventfans.

WILD TILE

Ann Sacks launched eight new sustainable tile collections at the show, with prices per square foot ranging from \$10 and up for a porcelain tile that resembles wood-plank flooring to \$350 and up for tiles made of stingray skin. The Ogassian and Petrified Wood samples shown here cost \$100 and \$225 per square foot, respectively.

Ann Sacks, 800/278-8453, annsacks.com.

Ogassian



Petrified Wood

ACCESSIBLE CABINETS

Wellborn makes its kitchen and bath cabinets — including doors, drawers, and face frames — in Alabama and even has its own sawmill. Its *Active Living Collection* is designed to improve accessibility for people of all ages and abilities. This “universal design” option is now available for good, better, and best cabinetry with no upcharge.

Wellborn Cabinet, 800/762-4475, wellborn.com.





SMART PULLOUT

According to Hafele, 80 percent of all base cabinets have a drawer over the door, yet 80 percent of the accessories made for these cabinets require a full-height door. Hafele's new *SmartCab* pullout fits into 15-inch or 18-inch base cabinets that have a drawer above the door, and it can be customized using interchangeable "Apps" like trays, a knife block, and a roll manager. The pullout mounts to the base cabinet with four screws and includes soft-close runners. It can be installed behind a hinged door, or the door can be attached to the front of the pullout. The pullout sells for \$290, and the Apps sell for \$20 to \$130.

Hafele America, 800/423-3531, hafele.com/us.

TOP-DRAWER RUNNERS

Blum's improved *Tandem plus Blumotion* soft-close full-extension undermount drawer runners — due to roll off production lines in North Carolina by the end of summer — will allow "four-dimensional" adjustment using simple built-in levers and dials. In other words, they'll allow you to adjust drawers from side to side and tweak their height, tilt, and depth (which should be especially useful for aligning inset drawer fronts). The runners are designed to meet or exceed ANSI/BHMA test specs with a 100-pound static load for good stability and minimal sag. They'll cost \$15 to \$40 per pair.

Blum, 800/438-6788, blum.com.



CONVINCING LAMINATES

Laminate countertops are still the economical choice, but — thanks to advanced printing techniques, tactile surfaces, improved durability, and new edges with less-conspicuous seams — today's top-of-the-line laminates seem like a whole new category. Formica just added five new patterns plus IdealEdge bullnose and ogee edges (which eliminate brown seams and work with curved, clipped, or 90-degree corners) to its *180fx* line of "exotic stone and granite" laminates. With the new edges, these countertops cost about \$25 to \$28 per square foot installed versus about \$12 per square foot for the company's standard laminates.

The *Wilsonart HD* brand of decorative laminates now includes more than 50 realistic surfaces, including 14 new ones inspired by Mediterranean and South African natural stone. The maker just unveiled two new edges — the Cascade and the Crescent — for a thick, seamless appearance. Integrated sinks are also available. The countertops and new edges cost about \$31 per square foot installed, and an integrated sink adds about \$400.

Formica Corp., 800/367-6422, formica.com.

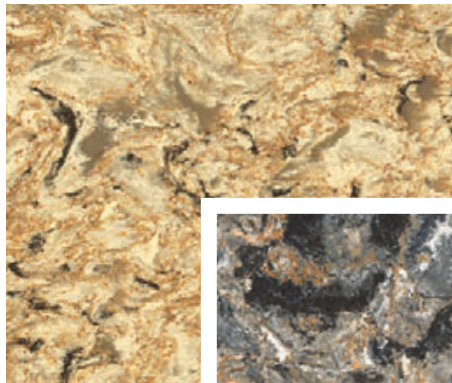
Wilsonart International, 800/433-3222, wilsonarthd.com.



Formica



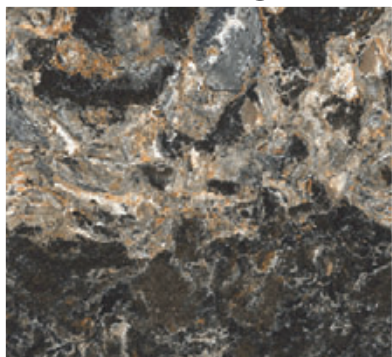
Wilsonart



QUARTZ SURFACES

In the world of countertops, quartz and granite are upscale rivals. Granite countertops are solid stone and require periodic sealing, while quartz countertops typically contain 93 percent pure quartz crystals blended with advanced polymers and require no sealing. Cambria claims that it offers the largest selection of quartz countertops in the world — more than 100 options. It makes all of its slabs in Minnesota. The countertops cost \$65 to \$100 per square foot.

Cambria USA, 866/226-2742, cambriausa.com.



WOOD COUNTERTOPS

Grothouse Lumber says its custom edge-grain, flat-grain, and butcher-block countertops and bar tops are made from more than 60 responsibly harvested wood species. The company offers 30 standard edge profiles, 40 stock stains, custom stain matching, and its own Durata permanent finish for non-chopping applications. It also makes custom wood sinks. Standard lead time is two to three weeks, and prices range from \$80 to \$400 per square foot. The 2¹/₄-inch-thick edge-grain Peruvian walnut countertop shown features a Durata Matte finish and costs \$160 per square foot.

Grothouse Lumber, 877/268-5412, glumber.com.



COMPATIBLE COPPER SINK

A contemporary take on the traditional farmhouse sink, the new *Paragon* undermount apron-front sink by Native Trails is made of 16-gauge hand-hammered recycled copper. Its apron drops just 6¹/₂ inches to allow easy installation in standard cabinetry. It costs about \$3,000 with an “antique” finish or \$4,300 with a brushed-nickel finish.

Native Trails, 800/786-0862, nativetrails.net.

CLEAN ASSEMBLY

The typical way to plumb a kitchen sink is to insert a strainer body or garbage-disposer sink flange ringed with plumber's putty into the drain hole, then secure it from beneath with a lock washer or screws.

Lenova's *PermaClean* stainless-steel sinks eliminate the strainer bodies and sink flanges and their unsanitary exposed seams. The drain hole flares underneath, creating a lip that accepts a special EPDM gasket so you can secure drain fittings or disposers by simply snapping on the C-clamp included with the sink. Other features include removable splash guards and strainer baskets that double as disposer plugs. The sinks cost \$275 to \$1,030, which includes the drain set.

Lenova Sinks, 877/733-1098, lenovasinks.com.



EVERYTHING PLUS THE KITCHEN SINK

Available in lengths of 4, 5¹/₂, and 7 feet, the trough-style stainless-steel *Galley* sink holds interchangeable cutting boards, colanders, bowls, and other accessories that slide above and below each other to create a versatile indoor or outdoor work station. You can also insert a galley divider and fill part of the sink with ice and drinks. The sink costs \$3,900 to \$7,000, with various accessories included. Additional accessories cost \$45 and up.

The Galley, 918/794-2700, thegalleyssink.com.



CHOICE DISPOSERS

InSinkErator's *Evolution* series offers quiet and efficient "food waste disposers" for a broad range of applications — the Compact, for instance, fits in tight spaces, and the Septic Assist injects a solution into the waste that supposedly helps keep septic systems healthy. All of the disposers feature twist-on/twist-off sink mounts. They cost \$375 to \$645.

Emerson Electric Co., 800/558-5712, insinkerator.com.





Delta



EASY FAUCETS

Pull-down and pull-out faucets are becoming the new standard for kitchens because their built-in multifunctional heads eliminate the need for a separate side-spray and make it easy to fill large pots. Delta's *Allora* pull-down faucet features the new EZ Anchor mounting assembly, which allows you to install the faucet from up top using the included EZ Bar and a screwdriver. (You still have to connect the lines underneath, but at least you don't have to lie on your back inside the cabinet.) The faucet comes with a chrome or stainless finish and costs \$410 or \$550.

Moen's new *Arbor* pull-down faucet with MotionSense has the usual handle but can also be operated by waving a hand over the spout or placing something underneath. The motion sensors are powered by six AA batteries that typically last about a year, or an optional AC adapter can be plugged into a GFCI outlet. The control box mounts under the sink. The faucet comes in three finishes — chrome, oil-rubbed bronze, and stainless — and costs \$625 to \$690.

Delta Faucet Co., 800/345-3358, deltafaucet.com.

Moen, 800/289-6636, moen.com.



Moen



SEGMENTED COOKTOP

Induction cooktops use electromagnetic energy to heat magnetic cookware directly while staying relatively cool to the touch. They change cooking temperatures instantly, boil water in a snap, and are easy to clean, but you have to learn how to cook by numbers to control the heat levels — which is why some people find it easier to cook some recipes with gas. Bertazzoni's new *Design Series* of segmented cooktops includes the versatile model PM36 1 IG X, which offers gas on the left, induction on the right, and an electric griddle in between. It fits the standard cutout for a 36-inch cooktop. Winner of the KBIS "Best of Show" award, the cooktop costs \$2,700. Other burner combinations are also available.

Bertazzoni, 866/905-0010, us.bertazzoni.com.





FULL STEAM AHEAD

According to Wolf Appliance, steam ovens cook up to 25 percent faster than standard ovens and help food retain up to 22 percent more vitamin content while preserving color, taste, moisture, and texture. The company's new stainless-steel *Convection Steam Oven* allegedly cooks everything from pastries to asparagus to rack of lamb, rejuvenates leftovers, works great for defrosting, and virtually eliminates the need for butter and oil. Other advanced features include a gourmet mode that automatically sets the time and temperature based on the amount and type of food being cooked. The oven costs \$3,500.

Wolf Appliance, 800/222-7820, subzero-wolf.com.



QUICK MASONRY FOR OUTDOOR KITCHENS

Eldorado Stone says it offers a faster and easier way to build masonry outdoor kitchens. *Eldorado Outdoor* is a collection of modular units that assemble quickly into the kitchen's basic shape and accept Eldorado or other manufactured stone or brick. The units are made of lightweight glass-fiber reinforced concrete that can be cut out on site to accommodate appliances and fixtures. The collection also includes sitting walls, fireplaces, and a fire pit. You can design your own configuration using the company's website. The modular components for the project shown cost about \$5,400.

Eldorado Stone, 800/925-1491, outdoor.eldoradostone.com.



OPENING GLASS WALL

NanaWall makes opening glass walls that meet fenestration-industry standards for air infiltration, water penetration, structural performance, and forced entry. The *NanaWall Kitchen Transition* promoted at the show is a custom window and door configuration that allows an indoor kitchen to double as an outdoor one, eliminating costly duplication and extra maintenance. The wall shown would cost about \$19,000, or \$1,000 per lineal foot.

NanaWall Systems, 800/873-5673, nanawall.com.





FUTURISTIC DIMMERS

Lutron's new C.L dimmers can dim incandescent and halogen bulbs as well as dimmable CFL and LED bulbs. They can even dim a mixed load of light sources on the same circuit. Lutron says they're free of common CFL and LED dimming problems like "drop-out" (bulbs turning off before the slider reaches the bottom). Several models are available, with prices from \$15 to \$40.

Lutron Electronics Co., 888/588-7661, lutron.com.

HANDY REFERENCE

The biggest KBIS booth belonged to the National Kitchen & Bath Association, which offers industry professionals all sorts of information, including the 84-page *Kitchen & Bathroom Planning Guidelines With Access Standards*. Based on the 2012 IRC and the latest ICC access standards, this illustrated spiral-bound booklet contains 31 guidelines for kitchens and 27 for bathrooms. It costs \$15 (\$12 for NKBA members). For \$5, you can buy an app for the iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch, or Android containing the same information, but searchable.

NKBA, 800/843-6522, nkba.org.



MODULAR LED TRIM

Keeler-brand *LIT* (Light Integrated Trim) combines low-voltage LED lighting strips with decorative trim and other elements to accent everything from cabinets and backsplashes to porch and deck railings. According to the manufacturer, you can easily create a continuous strip of any length with no soldering required. Various styles of decorative trim and optional covers (which can change the quality of the light) simply snap on. The product costs \$10 to \$40 per running foot.

Belwith Products, 800/235-9484, keelerproducts.com.

