

## What's cooking in kitchen design today

Start with a good dose of domestic necessities, as in refrigerators and stoves, and add to that a dash of design with customized architectural touches.

Then sprinkle in a smattering of the latest high-tech appliances, season with comfortable meeting and eating furniture, garnish with a pinch of personal treasures and you have the recipe for a '90s kitchen — a functional room that zizzles with style.

Today's chic kitchen is the culinary wing of an open-space center where cooking, dining and living functions merge for first-rate entertaining and family togetherness.

While there's no question the trend is toward kitchens that do more than cook, the latest trend in kitchen design is to not be trendy — most designers say no one kitchen design trend will emerge in the '90s, rather, we'll see more individual looks.

Today's kitchen is less of a laboratory and more of a living room with soft colors, cozy furnishings and treasured trinkets that bespeak the family personality. It's the heart of the home.

And since today's home often is a harrised one with Mom and Dad both bringing home the bacon rather than having lots of time to cook it, design choices — from built-in tables to countertop appliances — are based on convenience as well as looks.

### AMAZING ARCHITECTURE

Architectural and structural details range from customized-height counters to in-the-corner alcoves that provide work space for making shopping lists. And from work islands with pull-out tables to customized shelving in walk-in pantries.

One of the tastiest tendencies today is the intermingling of closed cabinets with open shelves or glass-front cabinets and benches. Open and glass-front shelves not only make it easier to locate necessary items quickly, they also showcase the family's collections, whether they be baskets or brass, candles or crystal.

Behind the closed doors lurk surprises, like built-in pantries with customized revolving shelves for easy access to bulk goods. Or under-the-counter slide-out bins for recycling flair in separating aluminum, glass, paper and plastic goods. Or swing-out shelves so the chef doesn't waste time searching through drawers to find needed utensils and pans.

Nearly every kitchen large enough to accommodate one has a work island. Some get paired with bar stools to double as fast-food counters for snacks or breakfast. Others house the stovetop or a sink to make for efficient traffic flow, and still others have roll-out tables that slide in and out of a slot in the island.

### FABULOUS FURNISHINGS

Regardless of structural detail, kitchens are a lot whiter and lighter.

They're following the trend of other living spaces in letting the outdoors in with skylights and large windows that make the outdoors a live-in painting.

People are trying to avoid the trendy mistakes of decades past, such as the dated, dreared avocado appliances of the '70s. But to avoid the high-tech starkness of the '80s, they're using color accents with the white.

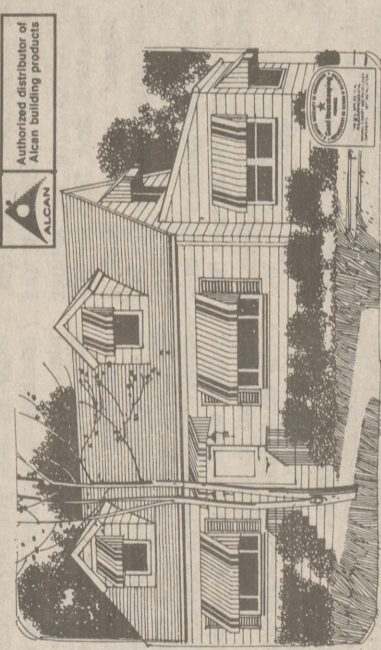
For a timeless look, designers recommend using neutral colors — such as white, beige or any soft tone — on kitchen surfaces that can't be easily or inexpensively changed such as tile, flooring and appliances. To that base, add colorful furnishings, fabrics and accents to make a fashion statement.

Any style of furnishing, from Southwestern to English Country, will work with a neutral base —

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## Some new ideas for contemporary living

If there's a consistent theme in furnishings today, it's that there is no single dominant style.

Blending in, items reflect the individualized tastes of their owners; comfort is key.

The word "eclectic" may occur to you, but beware — this is a tired term, and its connotation of anything-goes kitsch is not quite right for the '90s.

Call it the New Eclectic. Styles (which haven't disappeared, by the way) are combined with care; and, reflecting an appreciation for innovation, individual items themselves often exhibit several design elements.

For example, wood may be stained to give it color and to show off the grain (which has been done for centuries), then finished with a high-gloss polyester resin that resembles lacquer (creating a fresh, contemporary look).

A reproduction Louis XVI love seat might be covered in a Cubist print; a sleek metal Bauhaus-style chair might be reborn with classical scrolled tips and curved arms; and tapestry, an ages-old upholstery material, is boasting new, modern patterns.

This melange of styles and ideas can be both exhilarating and intimidating. Sure, it's fun to have so much freedom, so much opportunity to make a personal statement — but where does an unfurnished person begin?

Educate yourself about what is available, and as you do, discover your likes and dislikes. Read "shelter" magazines (those that pertain to residential interior design); visit furniture stores (start with the high-end, then work down to your price range); consult an interior designer (many department and furniture stores offer assistance, gratis).

Take an interior design course at a community college, get a book on the history of furniture, browse through antique stores, visit fabric and upholstery suppliers, go on home tours during the holidays, snoop through country inns and exotic resorts, and visit model homes. Make a scrapbook, a "wish book," of everything you see that you love — regardless of cost.

If this sounds time-consuming, consider the fact that the furnishings that surround you define your "comfort zone," the place to which you retreat from the world. Also, these items are investments, and you want to choose carefully to ensure their lasting value.

Even so, you needn't see the task as overwhelming. Furniture designers, manufacturers and retailers are aware of the dilemma you want to choose carefully to ensure their lasting value.

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### HOME FACTS

Spring is when most people decide to rearrange their furniture.

When people redecorate

SPRING 41%

WINTER 21%

SUMMER 15%

FALL 5%

ANYTIME-18%

SOURCE: Southwestern Bell

and have taken steps to remedy it. You'll find the furnishings sold in better stores arranged in "vignettes," displaying entire rooms at a time — including everything from accessories to area rugs — all done in impeccable taste. It's possible to buy the whole thing and simply plug it into your home.

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**FURNITURE TRENDS** - Eclecticism is the hallmark of current furniture trends. Try mixing contemporary chairs and lighting elements with a simple sofa upholstered in an inviting plaid.