

# Fashioning A ‘Fifth Wall’ That Will Floor You—And Your Guests

## Flooring Trends Move Towards the Ultra Light and Dark Décors

(NAPSA)—Once dominated by oak, flooring décors in America have seen a recent, dramatic shift in sales that indicates consumers are opening their minds—and their homes—to nontraditional flooring choices.

“It’s a very exciting time for our industry,” says Don Cybalski, senior creative director for Pergo, the world’s leading manufacturer and marketer of laminate flooring. “Consumers are getting it. Rather than thinking of the floor in a purely functional way, they are viewing it as a sort of ‘fifth wall’ and incorporating it into their overall design schemes.”

Influenced by glossy home magazines, decorating Web sites and the variety of home-focused programs on HGTV and other networks, consumers are more educated and inspired than ever. These resources, along with the vast array of marketing materials produced by manufacturers and retailers, are empowering consumers and giving them the confidence to take more risks in their decorating choices.

Case in point, Cybalski cites a very light, blocked beech design that he says Pergo initially introduced to demonstrate the beauty and flexibility of laminate designs. “We expected it to meet a niche market’s demands,” he says. “But when consumers saw how great it looked in our photography, they fell in love with its uniqueness and could see how it would fit into their homes. It’s now one of our best-selling designs.”

Yes, oak is still No. 1, but the company’s lineup of best-sellers currently includes a range of wood looks, including light beech, butternut and maple finishes, as well as a rich, dark cherry offering.



**In many homes across America, consumers are finding that laminate flooring—with its range of colors and finishes—provides a unique, functional alternative to wood flooring.**

“We are seeing huge growth at both ends of the design spectrum—the light lights and the dark darks,” explains Cybalski. “We’re also seeing more consumers gravitating toward exotic looks like bamboo, jatoba, merbau and teak.”

This movement can, in part, be attributed to emerging trends in the kitchen, where consumers are moving away from oak cabinets in favor of other woods such as birch, maple, mahogany and cherry. In fact, a recent issue of *Home Channel News* reported 63 percent of today’s kitchen cabinet sales in finishes other than oak.

“People are using woods such as birch and maple, and they’re really appreciative of the look of elegance,” says Mike Dame, product manager for Hope Lumber and Building Supply in Santa Fe, N.M. This trend can also be seen at Home Valu Interiors in Fridley, Minn., where kitchen and bath manager Paul Rudie says birch, mahogany and cherry now make up 90 percent of the items they sell.

Another reason for the rise in

demand for non-oak floors is the trend toward more open floor plans in homes, where kitchens flow directly into great rooms and other living spaces. “Consumers are coordinating floors with cabinetry, woodwork and furniture to achieve a smooth transition from room to room,” says Cybalski.

As for the increase in popularity of laminate flooring, he credits the incredible realism of today’s offerings that look—and feel—more like the real thing than ever before. Thanks to advanced texturing technologies that simulate natural wood grains and replicate the feel of hardwood, modern laminates are often mistaken for higher-priced solid woods. And offerings such as Pergo’s Select Traditional Strip come in varying lengths to create a sense of realistic randomness. Additionally, laminate flooring is easier to install and maintain and offers superior wearability as compared to other flooring options.

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