

Kitchen Korner

What's Cooking? Kitchen Redesigns For Baby Boomer Chefs



As homeowners age, kitchens can mature along with them.

(NAPSA)—Kitchen design today is beginning to reflect the individual needs of homeowners as growing numbers of baby boomers opt to customize their kitchens to accommodate physical changes as well as extended families.

Says designer Richard Schlesinger of Long Island on the sudden kitchen customizing trend, "I think it used to be the 11th Commandment, 'Thou shalt not change the kitchen.'" Schlesinger, who reports that a large percentage of his clients now individualize their kitchens to some degree, believes this new trend has to do with age and the attitude, "I'm going to get exactly what I want."

To determine the most requested customizations, the makers of Wilsonart Laminate polled top designers nationwide:

- **Task lighting.** "Lighting is vital," explains designer Jean Stoffer of River Forest, Ill. "No one wants to work in a dim space with shadows when trying to read cookbooks or make sauces." Task lighting shines light onto specific areas, such as where cutting, washing or cooking take place, as opposed to lighting an entire space.

- **Texture, low maintenance.** As boomers age and more men

take up roles in the kitchen, there is more emphasis on texture. Visual texture lends interest without sacrificing easy maintenance. "Laminate offers that concept of texture versus pattern. It provides a way to keep all family members happy," says Stoffer. Wilsonart recently launched Topaz, a collection of eight laminate patterns that replicate engineered stone, appealing to men and women alike.

Men also seem to prefer surfaces that are easy to clean and that don't show dirt easily. "Men aren't interested in high maintenance," says Stoffer. Laminate was created to be low-maintenance, durable and easy to clean.

- **Ergonomics.** To accommodate bad backs, New York designer Tom Law puts dishwashers, microwaves and wall-mounted ovens higher up. He also alters countertop heights, lowering them from the standard 36 inches to as low as 30 inches to ease or prevent back pain.

- **Two sinks.** A second smaller sink for kitchen islands is a "usable accessory for busy kitchens that can take a lot of abuse," says Schlesinger.

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