

New Products For Kitchen & Bath

by Patrick Galvin

Several distinct trends marked this year's Kitchen/Bath Industry Show in Atlanta. More products than ever feature glitzy, glossy finishes, and most "standard" lines look as good as the custom lines of a few years ago. Also, the conservation trend continues with the advancement of recycling storage designs and water-saving bathroom product innovations.

More Storage For More Stuff

The word in cabinets these days is sophistication. Most of the stock cabinet manufacturers now offer some lines with a full range of interior accessories and in high styles, such as KraftMaid's English Country (see photo, right). Many makers offer glossy white polyester or lacquer finishes. This kind of styling and finishing (previously available mainly in custom cabinets) can add considerable expense to the standard unit.

Some designers say white cabinetry is out, but you couldn't tell this at the shows. White is whiter than ever, made more lively with big splashes of color on counter surfaces, backsplashes, walls, and accessories.

Among cabinet accessories, Hafele showed a very handy step stool that folds down to provide a firm base for children at a sink or lavatory, or to help cooks reach high shelves in the wall cabinets. It can be mounted on any cabinet or vanity door. Hafele also exhibited a very sturdy kitchen tabletop that can be mounted and pulled out from under a counter (see Figure 1, next page). Most custom



Kraftmaid's English Country line of semicustom cabinets is one of several stock lines that offer the look and features of custom cabinets.

cabinets have pull-out tables with front legs that fit into recesses in the front of the cabinet run. The Hafele table improves on this by providing full extension slides, making legs unnecessary and installation neater and quicker.

High-tech storage. Automated storage comes to the kitchen with White's *Kitchen Carousel*. The new *Carousel* is about the size of a refrigerator and has 14 shelves with a total shelf area of 30 square feet. You rotate the shelves by pushing a numbered electronic keypad, which also serves as an index, to call whatever product you want to the opening. It operates on a standard 115V current.

The *Carousel* joins White's *Stor-mate* family of automated systems for pantries and closets. These systems might interest any builder or client looking to add amenities or squeeze a lot of storage space into a small area.

The recycling-conscious kitchen. Nearly all cabinet and hardware manufacturers have created new products or adapted old ones to make recycling easier.

For cabinet manufacturers, this is usually a wood bin that rolls out from a base cabinet, with two, three, or four compartments. For hardware manufacturers, it is usually a wire tray with one or more receptacles that slide out on extension slides fitted into a base cabinet.

Sleeker, Whiter Appliances

Kitchen appliances are also whiter and more sophisticated in styling and function. Everything is more cleanable, more electronic, and more energy-efficient, although there is still no certain answer for the upcoming ban (1996) on the ozone-destroying fluorocarbons used in refrigerators.

Microwaves will now pop your

popcorn just right when you push a "Popcorn" button, or they can be programmed automatically to cook or defrost specific foods.

In refrigerators, Amana is the first to offer a special enclosed chiller compartment with a control to keep milk and other dairy products five degrees colder than the normal 40 degrees, lengthening their storage life. This is endorsed by the American Dairy Industry Association.

Dishwasher manufacturers are stressing water conservation and quieter operation — new models have added insulation to isolate noise sources. Premium models save energy with booster heaters, so the temperature at the house's main water heater can be reduced.

Asko, a Swedish manufacturer, introduced a compact dishwasher that can be installed on a countertop under wall cabinets (see Figure 2, next page). It is 19½ inches high and 21⅞ inches wide, and, at 22⅞ inches deep, it will not protrude beyond the front edge of the counter. The two models are anything but compact in performance, however; Model 770 has 20 washing programs, Model 760 has eight, and both have three temperature settings, all controlled by electronic keypads. Asko says these models will accommodate six complete place settings and use only 3.6 gallons of water. They also can be installed in a base cabinet run or be freestanding. Asko also has a line of full-size dishwashers.

Ranges, like other appliances, are mostly white except for several commercial styles that cling to the metallic look. Here the emphasis

*Convenience, conservation, and fancy finishes
mark this year's K&B product innovations*



Figure 1. The full-extension slides on Hafele's new pull-out table/counter surface make legs unnecessary.



Figure 2. The compact size of this water-efficient dishwasher by Asko makes it suitable for counter-level mounting, easing loading and unloading.



Figure 3. This Laufen/Geberit commode saves floor space by stashing the works in a 2x6 stud wall.

is on streamlined design and cleanability. Most electric stove-tops have the sheet-of-glass look in white or black, and most gas models can be lifted apart for easy cleaning. Most manufacturers offer downdraft models with rear vent devices that pull up for use. More convection ovens are being introduced, which cook faster than traditional ovens by moving air in the cavity. Generally, the cook-

tops and wall ovens look much more sophisticated than the ranges.

Smaller, Faster Flushes

The ongoing issue in toilet design is still how to get a good low-flow product without spending a fortune. In particular, do the less expensive gravity-fed units perform as well as the pressure-assisted "flushometer" units, which

cost twice as much? American Standard tests show a carry of 60 feet down the drain line with flushometer models, and 40 feet (the minimum requirement for most standards) with gravity fed. Advocates of gravity-fed systems say that water from dishwashers, washing machines, sinks, and lavatories will add sufficient water volume to keep drain lines clear, but at this point, neither manufacturers nor legislators can predict their long-term performance. This is an area where it will pay to keep informed on product evaluations in the trade press.

The retro route. Two products offer new ways to retrofit existing 3.5-gallon toilets for lower flow. Con-Tech's *Future Flush* has a dual flush handle. A long finger of the handle releases a 3¹/₂-gallon flush to move solid waste. But for the five out of six flushes that carry only liquid waste and paper, a short finger on the handle releases only the adequate 1.5 gallons. In a

four-person household this can save more than 24,000 gallons per year.

Eco-Flush (Canedco) consists of a new flapper valve and a double doughnut device with an adjustable gap that fits on the overflow. It cuts the volume of water used per flush in half.

Both these devices improve on devices such as toilet dams by using all the water in the tank for full head pressure; this gives a forceful, effective flush while still saving water.

New designs. One interesting new design is Laufen's wall-mounted *Capella* bowl, which comes with a Geberit concealed tank (see Figure 3). The tank mounts in the framing in the wall behind, which must have a stud space at least 4³/₄ inches deep and 18³/₄ inches wide. It requires a 1/2-inch supply line and a 3-inch (nominal) outlet. The flusher is a handsome metal plate in the wall.

A French firm, Actana, offers



Figure 4. Grohmix is one of several shower faucets that control the temperature and protect against pressure changes.



Figure 5. This new tub by Kohler has a gasketed door to ease entry; when it closes and the water rises, sensors push the gaskets out to seal the door.

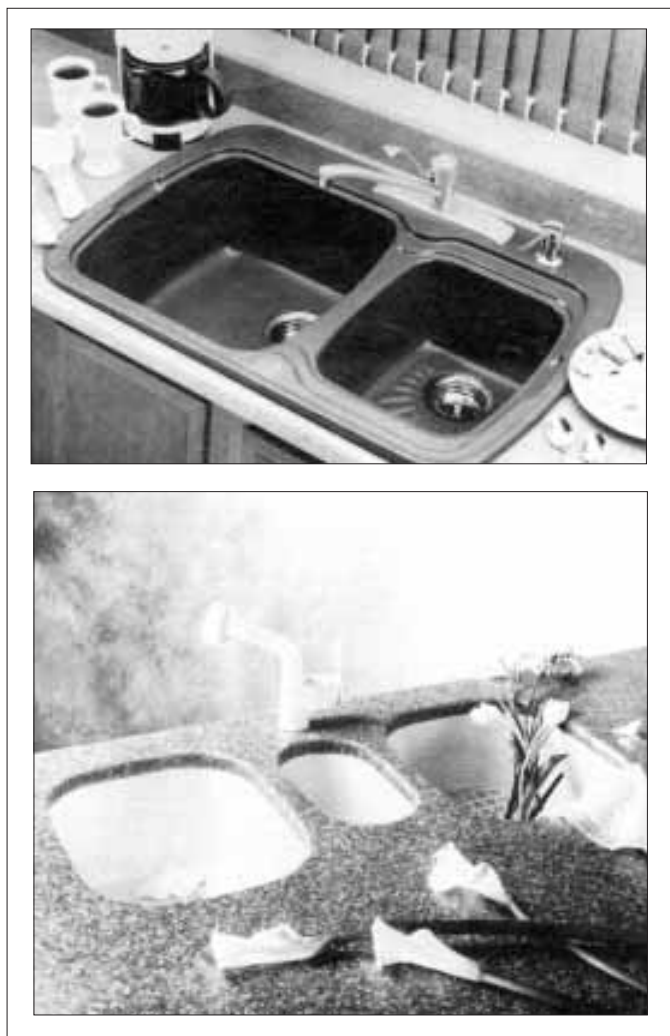


Figure 6. When it comes to sinks, cast iron is out, synthetic stone is in. Moen's Moenstone (top) and Franke's Quartz Elements (above) are among the new generation of solid surfacing products.

Superflush, a toilet that uses only 0.8 gallons per flush. It is actually an "upflush" toilet, with a mechanical pump that can send waste up, such as from a basement, as high as 20 feet or horizontally as far as 165 feet through a 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch drain line. Other appliances can be drained through it as well, making it doubly attractive as a basement model. Most other models require the installation of a pump either in a platform under the toilet (raising the toilet level), somewhere behind the toilet, or buried in the basement floor.

Actana says the model is quiet, with the motor running for only five seconds per flush, and that the line has sold well in Europe for 20 years. Two top-of-the-line models have Villeroy and Boch bowls in various colors. Actana also makes a "Kwikflush" motor that brings

the same upflush action to other standard toilets.

Fine-tuning the flow. Prodded by new state and local code requirements, manufacturers are coming out with more temperature and pressure regulators for showers. Anti-scald mixing valves include Grohe's Grohmix, a thermostat/pressure balance mixer that lets you specify a desired water temperature (see Figure 4, previous page). To get anything hotter than 100°F you must push a red override button.

The Temprol by Symmons must be manually adjusted to your desired temperature, but it will maintain that temperature through supply pressure fluctuations of up to 85%. The Safetymix Visu-Temp, also by Symmons, has an integral thermometer; you turn the dial to the temperature you want and the

valve does the rest.

Easy access to tub and shower. This year brought the usual abundance of fancy whirlpool tubs. Kohler did produce something new however — a 5-foot *Precedence* model with a doorway that opens inward to admit those unable (or not wanting) to climb over the rim (see Figure 5). When the door is closed and the water drawn, sensors on the bottom of the door push a waterproofing gasket out to seal the door. There is a seat at one end.

Atmo, of France, exhibited a glass shower door that can be lifted 11 inches (spring-assisted) and folded flat against the wall to provide easy access. The door also eliminates the need for a door track on the side of the tub.

Lyons Industries offered another solution to the track problem:

folding shower doors of clear plastic with a flange at the bottom that bends inward over the tub rim to deflect all water inside.

Like a Rock

On the way out, it seems, are cast-iron sinks. American Standard announced this year that it will no longer make them, preferring to buy them from other makers.

This is but one consequence of the industry's move to rock-like synthetic products (see Figure 6). Only three years ago, there were four widely available choices. Now you can choose from (among others) American Standard's *Americast*, Moen's *Moenstone*, Elkay's *Sculptura*, Blanco's *Silacron 2000*, Rock Solid's *Granitek*, Franke's *Quartz Elements*, Nevamar's *Fountainhead*, Swan's *Swanstone*, and, of course, DuPont's *Corian*, which



Figure 7. Chair rails, casings, and other Corian trims made by TFI Corporation snap onto premounted clips and can be used in wet locations.

has been around for 25 years.

Spray-on stone. One of the show's more intriguing product introductions is *Omniplex Liquid Stone* by Seagrave Coatings Corporation. This is a high-solids, spray-on polyester material that gives almost any base the look of granite, onyx, or other stone-like material. You can make a countertop, cabinet, or trim of wood or plastic, with intricate carvings or moldings, and then spray it to look like Corian, Avonite, or a similar material. *Liquid Stone* needs no cutting, routing, shaping, gluing, or edge-banding. Seagrave says repairs can be made by sanding (for scratches) or filling (for deep gouges).

Corian chair rails. Another new item is a line of chair rails and other decorative moldings and trim fashioned from DuPont Corian by TFI

Corporation, a hardware supplier. They can be used for all the usual spots, as well as for wet areas like shower and tub surrounds (see Figure 7). They snap into place with premounted clips and are available from Corian distributors in wood-grain patterns and other solid and textured colors.

Value Amid the Glitter

The many opportunities to upgrade may seem a bit out of place during a recession, but there are many products that are well worth the money. If your customers don't agree, the standard economy models are still available. ■

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