

# THE REAL DEAL

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## Redesigning the kitchen and bath

### New condo projects hide the appliances, increase shower space

By Cathy Hobbs

Kitchens today do not scream "trophy space" -- they whisper. And so, for that matter, do bathrooms.

The latest trend in kitchens and bathrooms is an emphasis on larger spaces and quiet, tasteful luxury, which can be seen in new condo projects popping up around the city.

Several interior designers are creating kitchens that conceal major appliances, or use appliances with smaller footprints. They are delivering larger spa-style bathrooms to appeal to buyers craving privacy and luxury, but they are also making eco-friendly choices when it comes to materials, using more teak, lava stone and bamboo.

In kitchens, "everything is going from being exposed to being hidden," says Andres Escobar, a New York- and Montreal-based interior designer. "People no longer feel the need to flaunt their appliances [such as] the Sub-Zero, the Viking, the Wolf. Today people are looking for kitchens to be more sleek and concealed. They are looking for a more seamless look."

That's the case at One Brooklyn Bridge Park, a high-end 449-unit condo and townhouse project being developed by RAL Companies & Affiliates. The apartments are being co-marketed by the Developers Group and Stribling Marketing Associates.

"Almost no one wants to see appliances anymore," says Highlyann Krasnow, executive vice president at the Developers Group. "The kitchen looks like a built-in piece of furniture; dishwashers are covered, refrigerators are covered. Instead of traditional ovens, you're seeing the really flat, sleek oven tops."

Sleek (and often smaller) appliances with brand names like Fisher & Paykel, Liebherr, Gaggenau, Miele and Bosch are increasingly replacing commercial-style appliances made by companies such as Viking and Wolf.

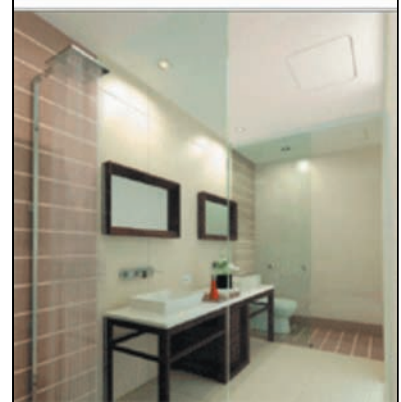
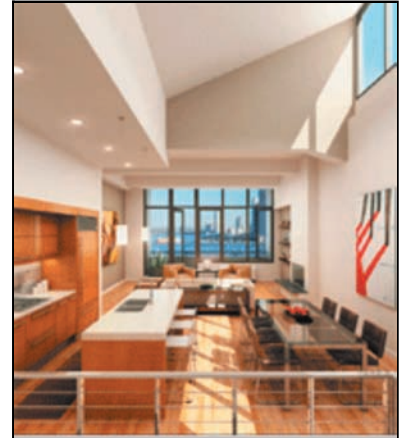
"The consumer is very savvy about appliances and the names of appliances. It really has become the new status symbol. Having the right appliances and the right combination of appliances, especially for a developer, is crucial," according to architect and interior designer S. Russell Groves, who recently designed the Lucida, a 110-unit project at 151 East 85th Street on the Upper East Side.

Yet while appliances are getting smaller, kitchens are not.

Out are kitchens one can't use: those without counter space. In are enlarged kitchen areas that are extensions of living spaces. Architect David Rockwell of the Rockwell Group points to his recently designed Riverhouse, a 32-story, 264-unit luxury condominium overlooking the Hudson River in Battery Park City, as an example.

"We are seeing more and more people using space for multiple uses, as a dining room, as a living room or as a craft center. At Riverhouse, the kitchen shelves fold up and are at child height, and they have the ability to be used in various ways throughout the day," says Rockwell.

Riverhouse and other projects also make use of environmentally friendly materials, such as teak-faced cabinetry and lava stone countertops. For the kitchens at the Lucida, Groves utilized a mix of materials, such as kitchen cabinets



In the kitchens at One Brooklyn Bridge Park, top, major appliances are concealed. Bathrooms in District at 60 Ann Street, bottom, are 10 feet by 6 feet, to recreate the feeling of being in a spa.

made of engineered rosewood and pearl white CaesarStone countertops. Many of the materials used throughout the building were renewable or recycled.

"I think green is the new wave in design in general," says Groves.

Lisa Hendrickson, owner of Hendrickson Custom Cabinetry, which specializes in high-end architectural millwork, notes trends in new developments often follow trends established first in the custom market. Like Groves, Hendrickson has seen a dramatic increase in the use of green materials.

"You're going to see bamboo all over the place. It's a renewable, sustainable material," she says. According to Hendrickson, bamboo has been used in the custom kitchen arena for the last four years.

As recently as five years ago, granite and marble were the standard for kitchens and baths, but today -- according to Kevin Mashia, a buyer in the tile division of bath products supplier Hastings Tile and Bath -- architects and designers are comfortable experimenting with new materials.

"I have really had to unload a lot of stone; people are really not coming to us for this as much anymore. The trends have been a lot of glass and mosaics, as well as ceramics and porcelains," says Mashia.

For many developers, the choice often comes down to price and durability. Porcelain tiles offer significant durability and can be used in high-traffic areas. Technological advances in tile production have also led to greater flexibility and creativity in the designs and prints available to design professionals. Animal and organic prints are newly available, as well as tiles with textures that mimic leather, Mashia says.

When it comes to the use of new materials, developers and designers are taking the trend beyond backsplashes and countertops by extending it to cabinetry as well. From new colors to materials such as lacquer and even glass, new materials are being incorporated into the kitchen design of new developments.

At Loft 25, an industrial loft conversion at 420 West 25th Street in Chelsea, the 79 units feature custom Schiffrini glass kitchens.

"Everything is glass, the countertop is glass, all the cabinet doors are glass, even the refrigerators are built-in and hidden behind glass panels," says Vincent Cangelosi, director of development at RAL Companies, the developer of the project.

#### Getting lost in the bathroom

Larger bathrooms are also turning up in newer developments like Loft 25, where the developers opted for 120- to 150-square-foot master bathrooms with generous showers and no bathtubs. "They are enormous showers, with rain shower heads, that don't have doors and that you can just step into," says Cangelosi. "People appreciate the bigger bathrooms -- maybe because it's the only place they can have peace."

The lack of a bathtub is a turn-off for some buyers, but a decision that Cangelosi says is helping sales at Loft 25.

"I think that people are appreciating the simplicity of it and the maintenance, as opposed to a room with all these separations and doors. A large master bath is something we are seeing as a must-have for most buyers," he notes.

For District at 60 Ann Street, designer Escobar created bathrooms that are 10 feet by 6 feet, in attempt to create a luxurious master spa.

"We created very large bathrooms that have a separate compartment for the toilet, double vanities and very large oversized showers," he says.

*Cathy Hobbs is an Emmy Award-winning journalist and interior designer.*