



Décor Score

by Rose Bennett Gilbert

Brighten up a Kitchen to Make it More 'Cozy' and Inviting

Q: I have had enough with so-called "cozy country kitchens" and all their clutter, dingy old colors and peeling paint. Quaint, it ain't — in my book, at least. Having said that, where do we go for ideas on contemporary kitchen design? We don't have a barrel of money, but we want a kitchen that's both sleek and functional — we're both avid cooks.

A: Go no farther than the nearest bookstore. Ideas galore overflow in a new book by an old hand in kitchen design, experienced editor Mervyn Kaufman. He's teamed with the editors of Woman's Day Special Interest Publications to produce "Contemporary Kitchen Style," subtitled "the essential handbook for an innovative design" (Filipacchi Publishing).

Kaufman has spent years overseeing state-of-the-art kitchens created by Woman's Day for the National Kitchen/Bath Industry Shows; he knows his stuff and also recognizes the right elements in other designers. For example, the pictured garden-fresh kitchen was a showcase for the cabinetmaker, Merillat.

From the glass-tiled walls out, Merillat designer Ingrid Leess orchestrated a springtime of different greens into a bright, efficient workspace that incorporates white cabinets, countertops of sparkling quartz as well as touches of gleaming stainless on the sleek range hood, cabinet hardware and appliances.

Around the center island, the kitchen features a smooth induction cooktop, double ovens (one is steam/convection) and awning-style translucent doors on the upper cabinets for quick access to stored items.

You'd hardly call this kitchen "cozy," but it does manage to remain cook-friendly and inviting, despite its clean, no-nonsense lines and straightforward allegiance to the work ethic.

Q: My sister-in-law's drapes are so long that they spill out on the floor. Should I suggest that she get them hemmed to the proper length?

A: For her, extra-long is the "proper" length. It's called "puddling," a look that's made its way from Old World rooms to homes in the West. Over-long flowing curtains bespeak luxury, wealth and, yes, maybe excess in these striated times. But it's not your place to bring your sister-in-law up short, so to speak.

Q: My husband fell in love with our friends' installed wood floor in their entry and living room. It looks really old, but our friends say it is handmade somewhere in Pennsylvania. We are redoing our basement family room and would love to use something similar to it. Can you help?

A: Sounds as if you've discovered hand-scraped hardwood flooring, a process that calls for individual handling of each wood plank. That way the texture and color vary interestingly from piece to piece, once the flooring is installed.

HomerWood Premium Hardwood Flooring, one such manufacturer, actually employs Amish craftsmen from the Pennsylvania-based community long renowned for the simple beauty of their woodworks. According to Erik Christensen, HomerWood's general manager, the planks are so individualized "it's like commissioning your own personal piece of floor art."

The Amish craftsmen sign the back of each piece. Ask and they'll also customize a plank with the name of the family in whose home it's to be installed. The floors come in woods like cherry, hickory, oak and black walnut, and also — lucky you — in an engineered construction that can be installed where solid wood shouldn't go, such as your basement.

Learn more at www.homerwood.com.

(set image) rgi052509-vis.jpg (end image) (set caption) A garden-fresh kitchen sparkles with glass tile walls, quartz countertops, and equal helpings of white cabinets and stainless steel. Photo courtesy of Jim Yochum. (end caption)

Rose Bennett Gilbert is the co-author of "Hampton Style" and associate editor of Country Decorating Ideas. To find out more about Rose Bennett Gilbert and read features by other Creators Syndicate writers and cartoonists, visit the Creators Syndicate website at www.creators.com.

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