

# in sink

Bold styles, innovative materials and exciting colors are transforming kitchen sinks into functional art. Here's what's new. **by Greg Cook**

**IMAGINE** a fun little prep sink packed with ice and brimming with bottled beverages, set into an island and surrounded by plates of appetizers. As guests arrive, some gather to stand and chat while others perch on stools. The party begins.

You've just envisioned how important entertaining has become in today's kitchens—and how sinks are being transformed into design accessories to accommodate this lifestyle. In fact, kitchen sinks are becoming flat-out artistic. Kay Green, president of Kay Green Design, Inc., in Orlando, Florida, says: "Sinks are out there in your face being pretty. People are entertaining, and it all centers on the kitchen and outdoor kitchen areas. So, as much as they are beautiful, sinks have to be practical and durable at the same time."

Of all the options, which is for you?

#### PRETTY PREP SINKS

The new contoured sinks in Elkay's Mystic™ line show how far we've come. Sensuous curves in stainless steel polished to a soft, satin finish grab your attention.

We can thank the kitchen island for bringing



FUNCTIONAL  
AND FUN

prep sinks to the forefront. Islands form the basis for zones devoted to the social aspects of today's kitchens. Larger kitchens can even accommodate two islands, which give designers more space to incorporate as separate zones for cooking, cleanup, baking and food prep.

Even though prep sinks are typically stainless steel, nickel and newly popular oil-bronze finishes are available. Some are made of beautifully colored glass, although glass more often is found in bathroom vessel sinks.

#### BIG, BLOCKY BASINS

Today's main kitchen sinks can be massive, with one, two or three bowls, and angular lines that emphasize their utility. Stainless steel is still the

#### LIFE OF THE PARTY

Above, undermount stainless-steel sinks are easy to clean, and their handsome good looks are welcome at any gathering.

most popular material, partly because it's a good match for commercial-style high-end kitchen appliances.

Thickness is measured with a gauge number: The lower the number, the thicker the steel. Manufacturers say thicker is better, but *Consumer Reports* found that thicker sinks aren't always tougher or more sound-resistant. It's a good idea to look for a stainless-steel sink with a spray coating on the underside to reduce sound when silverware is dropped in the bowl. Another hint: A satin finish provides some protection against scratching and water spotting.

Coming on strong are composites—quartz or granite mixed with an acrylic- or polyester-resin base. Composite sinks offer soft contours and great scratch and heat resistance. They come both in solid colors and stone look-alikes, with speckled surfaces. Solid-surface sinks such as DuPont's Corian® can be molded with the sink and countertop all in one. Another plus is color: This year, Corian is available in nine new colors from light to dark. Choose Rain Cloud, Stone Harbor or Burled Beach. Moen's MoenStone Granite composite sinks have a matte finish with a slight texture and come in black, blue, metallic, ivory and white.

#### FARMHOUSE CHIC

Recent years have seen a resurgence of popularity in farmhouse sinks. The concept hasn't changed—it's easier to handle pots and pans in one big



#### TRADITION WITH A TWIST

#### CURVES TO SERVE

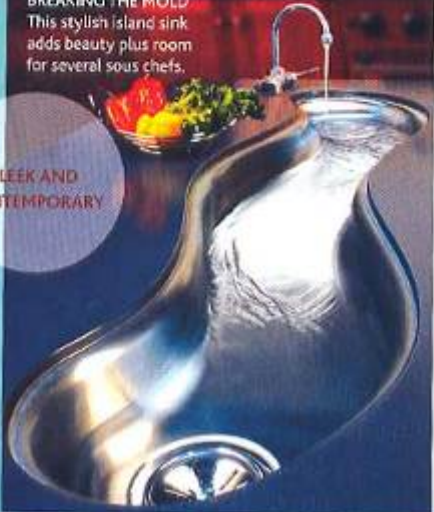
This unusual S-shaped sink with an exposed apron is a reproduction of an early 1900s butler's pantry sink used for cleaning fine china and crystal.

**whatever you choose, the kitchen and its sink have a big effect on resale.**

#### BREAKING THE MOLD

This stylish island sink adds beauty plus room for several sous chefs.

#### SLEEK AND CONTEMPORARY



basin. Today's versions are more attractive than their predecessors but still feature a prominent apron overlapping the front.

Enamel over cast iron is most often used in farmhouse sinks. Even though these sinks are known for their durability, the enamel can chip, exposing the black undersurface. Deep, rich colors are available. Kohler, for example, offers warm colors in enamel over cast iron as well as whites, neutrals and cool hues.

Costs vary widely, but generally stainless-steel sinks are least expensive, with cast iron next and composites and solid surface sinks most.

Whatever you choose, the kitchen and its sink have a big impact on resale. "Upgrading the kitchen is a big part of preparing a home for market," says CENTURY 21® professional Steve Roberson of Downey, California. "The kitchen is the main selling feature of a house. I just think it's incredibly important." ■

Greg Cook, who specializes in home-improvement topics, gathered the latest product and trend information for this story at the 2007 Kitchen and Bath Industry Show.