

Sinking In

Countless materials, shapes and accessories make kitchen sink customization a cinch



Today's main kitchen sink has a lot to live up to. "Resilience, ergonomic design and usable workspace dominate the list that consumers bring with them when sourcing a new sink," said Ken Fey, VP of sales and marketing for Houzer, Inc. But with options galore, homeowners can get everything on their list and more without sacrificing a thing.

"In as much as we hear a lot about contemporary, modern shapes, traditional shapes and materials are still very popular and important," said Ann Rottinghaus, marketing communications manager at Elkay. Consequently, there appears to be about equal demand for traditional products and their contemporary counterparts. "Right now, I do 40 percent transitional/contemporary and the other 60 percent is traditional," said Bruce Colucci, co, president and CEO of Le Gourmet Kitchen.

Style may be a split decision, but when it comes to installation, undermount is the clear winner. "I've never surface-mounted a sink," said Colucci. "It's a functional choice." But it's also an aesthetic preference. "There's no rim," explained Rottinghaus. "It's less intrusive and more seamless looking." In addition, said Fey, "The growth of stone and solid-material countertops have predicated the demand for undermount sinks, as traditional laminate tops require a drop-in type application to cover the wood core of the countertop exposed by the sink cutout."

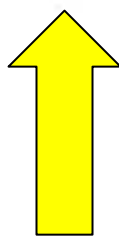
While stainless steel is here to stay, a crop of alternative materials, such as copper and granite, are in demand. "Diversification in terms of materials and having more choice is very important to consumers," said Rottinghaus. "It's not for everybody, but those at the high end seek that kind of individualization." Indeed, Colucci said, "In my market, clients expect me to find unique materials that are unlike what their friends have. I'm doing a kitchen now with two hammered copper sinks."

Regardless of material, there has been an emergence of diversity in shape. "Don't get me wrong," said Rottinghaus, "lots of folks are still buying double square-bowl sinks, but for those in the high-premium or luxury categories, they're really looking for something more customized to the thematic requirements of their room." This individualization is also being achieved with a range of bowl configurations. However, of note is the steadily increasing demand for large single-bowl sinks. "By the numbers, double bowls remain the leader in applications, but the rate at which larger single bowls are catching up is worth mentioning," said Fey. Colucci has also noticed the trend. While many of his clients may initially request a double-bowl sink, "as we begin to explain to them the uses of the sink and how best to organize their kitchen, I end up using more large single-bowl sinks."

But today's kitchens aren't limited to one sink. "Our average purchaser installs two to three sinks per job," said Rottinghaus. And these secondary sinks provide the opportunity to experiment with new materials. "When homeowners see that sinks can add to the visual landscape of their home and it's not just another consideration but actually a contributor to the overall aesthetic, then they want to do that."

Perhaps the most significant trend is the proliferation of handy accessories. With the consumer leaning toward customization and sinks evolving into full-service workstations, items like cutting boards, colanders and bottom grids enhance efficiency while optimizing space. As Fey noted, "Custom-fit wood cutting boards are ever increasing in popularity. They instantly transform an unusable area into a functional workspace." And when it comes to countertops, we'll take all the space we can get! ■

—Sally Moffat





(1) Offering an alternative to stainless steel, **Elkay's** Gourmet e-granite family of granite silica and acrylic resin sinks puts a modern twist on Old-World charm. Offered in several styles, the nonporous, heat-resistant sinks feature spacious compartments in double-bowl, single-bowl and island configurations. Undermount and universal-mount options are available and the sinks come in black, white and biscuit. Circle No. 200

(2) Farmhouse sinks remain a popular option for any kitchen and **Stone Forest's** Polished Farmsinks (Models CO4-33PF and CO4-33DPF) are no exception. Measuring 33 in. wide and 10 in. deep, they are offered in black granite, Carrara marble, honed basalt and papiro cream. Single- and double-bowl configurations are available. Circle No. 201

(3) Large single-bowl sinks like the J7 from **Julien** are steadily increasing in popularity. Sculpted from 90-percent-recycled stainless steel, it features a geometric modern design and 7-mm tight radius corners for easy maintenance and cleaning. It is available in several undermount configurations with the choice of single- or double bowls of variable depths. Circle No. 202

(4) With consumers clamoring for highly customizable workstations, **Blanco's** BLANCOPRECIS Multi-Level sink with drainer offers complete personalization. Made from Silgranit, a nonporous and durable material composed of 80-percent granite, it includes a sliding walnut cutting board, custom-sized, stainless-steel colander and three sink grids. Measuring 48 in. wide and 9 1/2 in. deep, the sink is offered in white, biscuit, anthracite and metallic gray. Circle No. 203

(5) Part of **Houzer, Inc.'s** Medallion Designer Series of premium undermount kitchen sinks, the MH-3200 Designer Offset Single Bowl combines the access of a single bowl with an eye-catching 70/30 standard double size. Measuring 31 1/2 in. x 21 in. x 9 in., the 18-gauge stainless-steel sink features SpecPlus Edges for maximum strength, StoneGuard Insulation and SuperSilencer sound-absorbing pads. It comes equipped with a complimentary strainer; other available accessories include a custom-fit, stainless-steel bottom grid, wood cutting board and polymer drying tray. Circle No. 204