

YOUR HOME



If you build it, they will play

Children need space, so let them have it. With U-Bild's woodworking plans, do-it-yourselfers can build a cottage-style playhouse with a porch, Dutch door and flower boxes. The plan is \$10.95 and has step-by-step instructions, patterns, cutting schedule and a help line for questions. The house measures 6 by 6 feet. Details: u-bild.com.

Tribune Newspapers



If you want to incorporate a rustic look into your kitchen design, an apron front kitchen sink is a good place to start. Choose faucets and handles that coordinate with the style of sink you've chosen. ELKAY PHOTO

The dish on sink styles

By Allison E. Beatty
SPECIAL TO THE TRIBUNE

When buying a kitchen sink, it helps to start with one basic question: "One bowl or two?"

This question will help steer you toward the design that makes the most sense for your lifestyle.

Single-bowl sinks evolved from the old-fashioned farmhouse sink with its deep utilitarian basin.

Double-bowl sinks then became the rage, as they allowed homeowners to separate the washing and rinsing tasks into individual bowls basins. Today, there remains a split between the two camps.

In the end, it boils down to how you cook and what you wash. Those who prepare meals with large pots or bake with long cookie sheets often prefer the single bowl basin. Others still prefer the ability to separate tasks with two sinks. Double-bowl sinks are made with sections split in two equal sizes or with one basin that is larger than the other.

"We all have so many big items — cookie sheets, muffin pans, the 10-inch pan with the 8-inch handle," said Cheryl Daugvila, owner of Cheryl D & Co., a kitchen and bath design firm in LaGrange. "The double-bowl sinks are great, but not for big items."

Tap into designs for kitchen sinks and faucets that work for you and express your personality

The debate over sink bowl configuration is the first step in narrowing down the many options in kitchen sinks. The next step is to select the material and the way it is installed. Then the faucet selection comes into play.

Stainless steel has been the best-selling sink material for years, as it adds a gourmet restaurant look to the kitchen and is easy to clean. Stainless steel comes in several thicknesses, which is measured in gauges that typically range from 16 to 22.

"The lower the number, the thicker the material," said Gray Uhl, director of design for American Standard, a plumbing products manufacturer in Piscataway, N.J. "If consumers see a sink that is 22 gauge, that's a thinner, cheaper sink."

A stainless-steel sink ranges from \$75 to \$400 or more, depending on the thickness, design and manufacturer.

Cast iron is another durable material and one that is a favorite of many with traditional-styled kitchens. The material typically is sold in whites and creams, which suits those who prefer a warm color to the more cool sheen of stainless steel, Daugvila said. These sinks,

which are much heavier than stainless steel sinks, typically cost \$300 to \$600.

There also are sinks made of vitreous china, a durable material used to make toilets, or solid surface material. The latter choice is built as an integral part of the countertop. Many people like this style because it is one continuous material and eliminates issues with food getting caught on the outside lip of the sink.

That outside lip is seen in sinks that are called "overmount" or "drop in" models. Many people have moved away from that design toward sinks that mount under the countertop. "With undermount sinks, a lot of it's the look, but it's so easy to wipe food right into the sink," Uhl said.

The finishing touch to any sink purchase is the faucet, as this completes the picture from a design and functionality standpoint. Among the popular trends are high-arching faucets that feature stems that might reach six to eight inches into the air.

The most popular feature for many people is the pull-out sprayer, which allows you to rinse a wide area and even fill a large pot

sitting on the countertop.

"In the old days, faucets were two-handled or one handle with a separate sprayer that never worked," said Al DeGenova, director of marketing communications for Grohe, a faucet manufacturer based in Bloomingdale. "The pull-out faucet added that great functionality to the sink. It allows you to control the temperature and water control with one hand." Faucets with pull-out sprayers are priced from \$200 to \$600 or more. The more expensive models might be made from solid stainless steel and have solid brass construction on the inside. Some have easy cleaning options for removing lime scale or variable controls for the water flow.

When buying a sink and faucet, also consider:

- Removable draining boards that fit in the bottom of a sink.
- The sink depth — the standard is about 8 inches, but there are sinks that reach down to 12 inches.
- The most common kitchen sink size is 33 inches wide by 22 inches front to back, as that fits into a standard 36-inch base cabinet.
- Buying a faucet with a ceramic disk cartridge, as it is considered more durable.
- The faucet finish. Among the popular finishes are satin nickel and oil rubbed bronze.



With a double-bowl sink, you can use one side to wash dishes and the other to rinse them. ELKAY PHOTO



Copper kitchen sinks have a built-in natural chemical mechanism that kills many bacteria. JOHN MUTRUX/KANSAS CITY STAR



The white porcelain sink is a standard in many households. Porcelain can be budget-friendly. AMERICAN STANDARD PHOTO



Pull-out sprays offer the functionality of a side spray with the streamlined look of a one-piece faucet. KOHLER PHOTO