

STEAMBOAT Homefinder

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ONE STEAMBOAT PLACE: SLOPESIDE LIVING, STEPS FROM THE NEW GONDOLA

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All-white kitchens, which were buyers' favorites over the last 20 years, are making way for a wave of blues.

Trend Report: Kitchens

Pot-fillers, brass hardware and talking freezers: Today's homebuyers want kitchen features undreamt of a decade ago

A home without a kitchen is unthinkable. You can get by without a family room, a home office, or even a dedicated bedroom (remember that post-college studio?), but until you have a space for storing and preparing food, your house is like a car without an engine. Kids do their homework there, parents pay bills, and friends gather during parties. It's the reason kitchen remodels are the most popular major home improvement in the country. They're also the most expensive. Whether you're selling your place or are increasing your own pleasure, it pays to know which upgrades are trending. We asked Amanda Pendleton, lifestyle expert at Zillow

(zillow.com), to share data on the updates buyers are looking for, so you can put your money where your mouth is.

TEAR DOWN THOSE WALLS

If you think "open-concept" is a buzzword solely the purview of HGTV, you're wrong. Open kitchens that flow into a dining or living area are everything. "Millennials make up 42 percent of buyers," says Pendleton, "and they have young families or are starting families. They want a place where they can keep an eye on the kids." They also envision themselves as entertainers, who can keep the conversation going while grabbing another tray of cheese puffs

from the oven. "Kitchens aren't just the heart of the home, they're doing double-duty as offices, dedicated bars and homework spaces," she says.

THINK LIKE A CHEF

Zillow recently compiled a list of key words that positively impacted the speed and the price at which homes were sold. Six out of 10 were features that would normally be associated primarily with upscale chef's kitchens. Steam ovens, extolled as a faster, healthier way to cook, is the number-one feature that helps sell a home, followed by professional appliances, wine cellars, pot fillers, waterfall countertops and

prep sinks. “Certain features stand out and say that this house is special, and something worth paying a premium for,” Pendleton says. Even buyers who have never roasted a chicken want the bells and whistles. “They see it on their favorite cooking shows and are willing to pay for it.”

GET ON ISLAND TIME

According to Zillow, super-size kitchen islands aren’t just a flash in the pan. “Think of them as an extension of kitchen cabinetry, with prep sinks, wine fridges, microwave drawers, and more counter seating. Big islands are extremely desirable,” says Pendleton. Breakfast nooks are another popular feature. “Nooks are a growing trend all over the home — reading nooks and play nooks, as well as dining nooks.” As the formal dining room goes out of style, people still need a place to sit and eat. Enter the banquettes, nooks and counter seating.

KEEP UP WITH MATERIALS AND FINISHES

When it comes to finishes, the classics have staying power. Wood Shaker-style cabinets continue to dominate (they command an almost 21 percent premium in home sale price), but the blinding-white kitchen of recent years is giving

way to color. “Blues and greens — sky, emerald — are replacing all-white kitchens, and ‘tuxedo-style’ kitchens, which have dark cabinets with light walls, or vice versa, are seeing a bump in price,” says Pendleton. And open shelving, as impractical as it sounds, makes a huge difference when a house is on the market: “It’s the number one feature that sells a home fast.”

Despite a rise in the popularity of Moroccan, hand-painted, and cement tile, subway tile is still the most popular backsplash material; homes that feature it sell at a 10 percent premium. Herringbone backsplashes get even more of a price bump (18.5 percent). The reason, says Pendleton, isn’t that people are Jonesing for herringbone, but that certain words in a listing indicate that a home is owned by someone with high design taste.

“You can’t just install herringbone and assume you’ll get a better sale price; it has to reflect an overall attention to detail.”

Other biggies: quartz countertops (representing a 20.7 percent sale premium), hardwood floors and hardware in matte black and brass finishes. “Brass warms up some of the cooler tones we typically see in kitchens,” she says. When we see it as a listing keyword, houses sell more quickly at a 17 percent premium.”



Photos courtesy of Shutterstock photos



Move over, granite: When a listing features quartz countertops, home sellers can see a serious bump in sale price.

TOP TRENDS IN KITCHEN DESIGN *Photos courtesy of David Patterson*



Impractical as it seems, homebuyers love the idea of open shelving.

While stainless steel was once the hallmark of a high-end kitchen, buyers are now looking for paneled appliances, black appliances, even custom colors.

DON'T NEGLECT THE WORKHORSES

It's no surprise that stainless steel appliances are still the buyers' favorites, "to the point that it's become an expected finish. If you're buying a newish home, you expect that you'll find stainless steel," says Pendleton. But while stainless was once the hallmark of a high-end kitchen, she says "buyers are now looking for what's going to make a kitchen special, including paneled appliances, black appliances, even custom colors."

You can thank Chip and Joanna Gaines for the continued appeal of farmhouse sinks, which when included on a listing can add a 17.6 percent premium to a home's sale price. But even more of a selling point is the overall number of sinks in a kitchen. "Extra sinks, more sinks, bar sinks, veggie sinks — they are a huge selling point" representing a 24.1 percent premium, says Pendleton. Lighting-wise, while recessed lights and pendants still strike the buyers' fancy, the hottest change in

kitchen illumination is the proliferation of high-design fixtures. "People are moving away from simple task lighting to fancier lighting — chandeliers and statement pieces." And what about smart kitchen technology, such as talking refrigerators, WiFi-connected ranges, and voice controlled ovens? It's still early days in the world of multitasking appliances, but Pendleton says they are already impacting home sales. "People just think they're cool."

For more trends in local kitchen design, we went to Sarah Tiedeken O'Brien, partner and owner of Steamboat's Vertical Arts (vertical-arts.com). Here's what she has to say:

1. COLOR AND TEXTURE

Rich browns and chalky greys have become a popular combination in many mountain homes. We're seeing wood veneers that are streamlined, rift cut or wire-brushed to maintain a clean aesthetic yet add the warmth only wood can bring. There are also fun new wallpapers and accent tiles that can be applied sparingly for a big change.

2. LIGHT

Working in a dark, unconnected kitchen doesn't inspire much. Everyone can appreciate natural light and breezes flowing

into their kitchen space whether they are cooking up a gourmet meal or eating takeout. Changing out decorative lighting fixtures always adds a new design flair and can be done inexpensively. New LED technology has allowed more creative uses of cove lights, undercounter elements and niche accents.

3. FOOD STORAGE

Great options exist to create the perfect combination of refrigeration and freezer. From stand-alone columns to undercounter drawers, everyone can find the perfect flow without being restricted to a traditional over/

under model or side-by-side set-up. Doing a deep dive into functional and aesthetic needs can help you pick and choose which items need to be more functional and which items can have more design flair.

4. CABINETS AND COUNTERS

More often than ever our kitchens don't include typical "upper cabinets." We utilize large cabinet "blocks" to create space for storage and appliances without completely separating the kitchen with a traditional wall. People love concrete counters for their unique textures, natural vibe and ability to create integrated elements like sinks and drainboards. Concrete is great because it can go both modern and traditional depending on how you use it.