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HOME AND GARDEN TRENDS

Is Your Kitchen Outdated? Designers Say it's Time to Phase Out These Features

We talked to the pros to gauge what kitchen design and renovation trends are on their way out. Are you tuned into the latest outdated kitchen trends?

Emily Fazio • Nov 22, 2024 10:00 AM EST



GE Lighting

Kitchens are the heart of our homes, but some design choices can make them feel dated. Just as you can walk into an estate sale and pinpoint what decade the homeowner renovated the kitchen, it's important to take a step back and look at your own space (especially if you're going to sell your home in the coming year or two). Some design [trends](#) that once dominated home decor now seem outdated. And, some spaces feel overly busy, while others feel sterile, or impractical.

As Jill McAdams, owner of [Kitchen Solvers of the Emerald Coast](#), explains, today's homeowners are gravitating toward designs that strike a balance between timeless style and modern functionality. She helped us highlight six kitchen trends that are falling out of favor—and makes recommendations on how to update them for a stylish, welcoming space.

1. Monochromatic Kitchens

The all-white kitchen had a good run. A sleek, monochrome kitchen might look great on [Pinterest](#), but in real life, it often feels cold and uninviting. “No one wants to sit and stay because they’re too worried about bringing dirt into the space or because it’s not welcoming to visitors,” McAdams notes. The lack of personality and dimension in finishes can make these spaces feel one-dimensional.

Instead, consider blending neutral tones with texture. McAdams suggests using textured glass and tone-on-tone color palettes to add depth. To that, we'd recommend wallpapers with natural texture, or appliances that add an edge. “Those pops of color add personality and interest without overwhelming the space,” she adds.

2. Overly Ornate Cabinetry

Gone are the days of intricate moldings and overly decorative cabinets. “Most of my clients want a simple shaker, not layers of moldings that become dust magnets,” McAdams says. Ornate cabinet hardware too can not only feel dated but also make cleaning a hassle.

For a modern twist, McAdams incorporates subtle variations on the shaker style, like mitered profiles or applied moldings. These details add individuality to the base and wall cabinetry without sacrificing timeless appeal. Take it a step further and integrate appliances, like microwaves and refrigerators, into your cabinets. Custom doors go a long way at helping your space feel modernized.

3. Granite Countertops

Granite, once a must-have material for countertops, has definitely lost its luster. Its bold patterns and heavy movement can make it hard to coordinate with other design elements, which can inadvertently age the overall aesthetic. “There is nothing simple about a granite countertop,” McAdams explains. She goes on to explain that quartz is now the top choice for many homeowners. We used it in our own kitchen remodel and love it more than our previous granite. Plus, remember: It's available in a wide variety of colors and patterns, so whether you want a detailed pattern like traditional granite or need something more natural, it's not hard to achieve a cohesive look.

4. Harsh Overhead Lighting

Fluorescent lights belong in classrooms, not kitchens. “It gives me ‘elementary school cafeteria’ vibes and dulls every design,” says McAdams. Harsh overhead lighting can flatten the room's aesthetic and create an uninviting atmosphere.

For a more dynamic lighting plan:

- Add under-cabinet, above-cabinet, and toe-kick lighting for ambient glow.
- Install recessed light fixtures with dimmable zones for versatility.
- Opt for textured pendant lights over islands or sinks to add character.

“Zoning the lighting can really elevate the mood of the space,” McAdams explains. This layered approach provides functionality and ambiance, ensuring your kitchen shines in any situation.

5. Open Shelving

Open shelving is another one of those things we want to like, but having tried it, understand that the upkeep isn't for everyone. “Most clients aren't interested in displaying items,” McAdams says. “They prefer to keep cabinets closed or use heavily textured glass inserts so no one is judging how they organize.”

Closed cabinetry with decorative or textured glass inserts is a better balance of style and practicality. You can keep it looking neat, but without the non-stop chore of dusting.

6. Busy Backsplashes

A bold backsplash with intricate patterns and grout lines can quickly overwhelm a kitchen's design. “The grout lines and busy patterns sometimes tend to be overwhelming for the space,” McAdams notes.

For a seamless, contemporary look, McAdams often uses countertop materials as a backsplash, and our kitchen designer recommended the same. This approach reduces grout lines, simplifies cleaning, and creates a cohesive design. For those who still love traditional tile, do your research. You'll want one that elevates the room's aesthetic without overpowering it.

FAQ

How do I decide when to replace outdated kitchen elements?

If a design choice no longer feels functional, welcoming, or easy to maintain, it might be time for an update. Consider how each element contributes to your atmosphere and decide whether it aligns with your current lifestyle needs. Whether you isolate a renovation to cabinet doors and lighting, or want to refresh your space with new kitchen countertops or architectural elements, you choose the scope to make your space better suited for your design style.

What's the best way to incorporate timeless trends into my kitchen?

Focus on layering textures, choosing neutral colors (with pops of color, that's fine), and blending practical elements with subtle design details. Pay attention to the flooring, stone choices, and other natural elements you use before you commit to something that may look quickly outdated. This will help your kitchen feel modern while remaining versatile in the future.