

DESIGN & DECORATING

BY YELENA MOROZ ALPERT

Be Still, My Heart of the Home

If everything wants to stand out, nothing will," said Kelsey Hills, a Dallas homeowner who hired a local pro to quiet the center of her house, the kitchen. Architect and designer Eddie Maestri infused the room with white oak—on the floor, flat-front cabinets and island. "Having a kitchen without a lot of competing design elements calms me," said Mrs. Hills.

Enter the era of seamless kitchens. "Visual cues are changing," said Mr. Maestri. Gone are look-at-me hoods and, for some, hulking marble islands. Paneled cabinets bejeweled with pulls are giving way to overlay fronts

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and hidden hardware. The visual cacophony of open shelves is history.

When Ferguson Kitchen, Bath & Lighting Gallery—a showroom retailer based in Newport News, Va.—recently surveyed homeowners on which room they wished to redesign, 47% replied "the kitchen," more than chose any other room in the house. If you share that impulse, here are five ideas to update your kitchen, plus the trends designers consider passé.

IN Woody Kitchens (1) "Ninety percent of our clients are doing all wood, compared to only 30% to 40% of clients who wanted all wood a year or two ago," said Candace Matlock, senior designer at Italkraft, a design consulting firm in Miami. The grainy finishes conjure a "relaxing feeling, like a spa," she said. A recent Miami Beach kitchen combines tropical and minimalist design, using floor-to-ceiling teak veneer and white oak flooring. "The wood millwork gives warmth to the barefoot elegance of the home," said Kobi Karp, the Miami archi-

Five design trends that add up to quietly cohesive kitchens—which, design pros predict, is the next big thing



WITH THE GRAIN White oak that extends from island to floor to cabinets unifies and calms a Manhattan kitchen designed by local consulting firm Colony.

tect on the project.

OUT The stark contrast of coal gray cabinets and white counters is the antithesis of warmth.

IN Hidden Hoods (2) Designers are tucking stove vents behind cabinets or drywall both to save money and to shift the emphasis to less-prosaic features. "[A kitchen's] visual statement should be more than an appliance," said Mr. Maestri, who hid a vent behind a false cabinet front so a brass-inlaid backsplash of black marble could shine. **OUT** Ostentatious hoods.

IN Tablelike Islands (3) In the New York City kitchen above, design gallery and consulting firm Colony opted for the airiness and simplicity of a Parson's-inspired white oak table instead of a voluminous island. In Chicago, interior designer Claire Staszak worked with a maker on Etsy to transform a pine table into a vintage-tinged country-style piece that suited a tight kitchen space. "The table brought character to the white kitchen, and unlike a solid island, created a feeling of circulation," she said. Another perk: Portability offers more layout flexibility.

OUT Islands with two levels—one counter height, the second raised to accommodate bar stools—skew commercial. Plus, "it cuts usable food-prep surface in half," Ms. Staszak said.

IN Glass Cabinets (4) See-through storage is clearly back but not in a traditional "grandma's china cabinet" way, observed Mr. Maestri, who opted for reeded-glass panels set in black steel to complement a noir-and-brass backsplash behind the cooktop (shown left). The groovy glass not only adds texture but camouflages storage so "you see a ghost of what's there," he said. Ms. Staszak invigorates more-traditional, beveled-glass cabinets by lining the interior with peek-a-boo Schumacher wallpaper. **OUT** Open shelving is left in the greasy dust.

IN Integrated Stove Tops (5) Rather than installing range-oven units, some designers are opting for the cleaner look of a stove top only, set into counter material, with ovens installed elsewhere. The range's control knobs can then be integrated into

material that matches the lower cabinets or counter material. In an East Hampton, N.Y., cottage, architect and designer Noam Dvir, half of Manhattan firm BoND, fused the range components into terrazzo-like Ceppo di Gré stone, using

"the heavy marble like wrapping paper." A polished stretch of stone flows seamlessly from a backsplash into a counter (into which the stove top is sunk) and then to a fascia for the knobs. **OUT** A standard range that disrupts visual continuity.



From top: (4) Fluted glass fronts cabinets in a kitchen by Maestri Studio, in Dallas; (5) In East Hampton, N.Y., Manhattan architects BoND, embedded stove and control knobs in marble.

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