

The New Role of Hoods as Architectural Focal Points

Until a decade or so ago, a hood was usually just a fan, encased in a white sheet-metal box, hanging from a cabinet over the range. Lately designers have seized the opportunity to create an architectural statement with this one-time utilitarian appliance. They are drawing our attention to the hood – and they are doing so with a variety of mediums.

The wood hood lends a unified architectural structure to the room. It combines the functions of the hood and the beauty of the cabinetry with a seamless grace. Wood hoods offer efficiency both in that the wood hood can be installed at the same time as the cabinetry and that they can be designed to fit any size/shape insert. Wood hoods can also offer hidden storage options integrated right into the hood surround itself. The details available with a wood hood are unlimited – from a simple slanted cottage design to large and complex mantel styles. Include tile medallions, hammered metal details, or exotic woods for more variety.



Borrowing images from custom fireplaces & mantels, plaster hoods are another popular option. Plaster hoods come in many formats, shapes and sizes. For the greatest level of customization, your builder or kitchen designer can design one for you to be built on site. A built-in-place plaster hood will complement your kitchen because it is constructed especially to fit your overall style. Often wood trim or a band of tile is added for color & accent. Perhaps some used brick or a carved onlay can be included. Also, on a more practical front, the custom designed plaster hood will give you the most flexibility of any when selecting your insert/blower units.

It is also possible to purchase pre-cast composite hoods from several different manufacturers – just paint or faux finish for that classic plaster feel. While these give you the same overall look of a built-in-place hood, they should save you both time and money; they are usually very light so installation is simple too. Pre-cast hoods allow a certain amount of customization but they do tend to be more limited than built-in-place hoods.

Off-the-shelf decorative metal hoods can be one of the simplest solutions. Most appliance lines feature several metal hood varieties – from stainless & glass contemporary models to more industrial professional looks. Or you can have a custom made metal hood – create a hefty copper “old world” style or a techno-modern extravaganza – the sky’s the limit!



By making a distinct design statement with an architectural hood, the kitchen designer is emphasizing the creative importance of the kitchen and the cook to the home. No longer is the kitchen segregated away as a utilitarian workspace, it is celebrated as the heart of the home both in style and in function.

By Sarah Day &
Lee Anna O'Daniel

