

# "So, what is new in cabinetry and kitchens these days?"

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Over the last 27 years as kitchen designers, we are often asked, "So, what is new in cabinetry and kitchens these days?" To answer this, we need to break it down into Cabinetry Construction Improvements, Functional Options, and Style Trends.

## Construction Improvements:

Back in 1984 when we started the first kitchen showroom in San Luis Obispo, few people ever mentioned "full extension" drawers. This would mostly be for commercial work - it is where the drawer comes out all the way so that one can get to all the contents. But now, by popular demand, full extension drawers have become the norm. Who wouldn't want them? And better yet, the "soft-close" drawer slides. This is where you give the drawer a decided push, and when it gets to within a few inches of closure, it slows down and gently glides in place. No more slamming drawers when you get mad! You will have to take your aggressions out on something else. These were first introduced to us by Blum (pronounced like "bloom") in 2003, and have gradually made it into all of our cabinetry. This is a drawer slide that is actually made in the good ol' US of A! (we would say, beware the knock-offs that are made in a great big country across the ocean as these don't hold up as well - and the box stores don't disclose this in their "name-brand" cabinetry). Another nice thing about these drawer glides is that they are concealed under the drawer so you get a more furniture look (no unsightly industrial hardware on the sides), plus a wider drawer inside to hold more contents.

Along with this, we have seen improvements in the drawer construction. Only lower grade cabinets are now made with pressed board sides, stapled together - but buyer beware - if you don't ask for dovetailed solid wood sides on your drawers, or one of the metal integrated type European drawers, you will likely get drawers made of particle board covered with white or wood-grained material - clearly not as strong as solid maple or aluminum. Most custom shops can provide you with dovetailed drawers, but it would usually be an upgrade, and you would need to know to ask for it.

Now that you've got soft closing drawers, how about the doors? Well, over the last 27 years we have seen drastic improvements in hinges. We used to have to use the "knife" hinge to get somewhat of a concealed look - this required a slit in the edge of the door and from the side you could see part of the hinge. Then, the Europeans designed a hinge that was totally hidden from the exterior of the cabinet. At first they had a few parts that tended to break, but now they have improved them to the point that they come with a lifetime warranty! The good ones are also 6 way adjustable - up/down, left/right, in/out, so that you can keep the doors aligned to each other. This is critical with a "European" frameless cabinet as it calls for a much more precision as the doors and drawers have very slight "reveals" - space between them. So, following up with the soft-close idea, Blum introduced the integrated soft-close hinge last year, which has a mechanism built into the "hinge-cup" - the part that recesses into the back of the door. This makes it so when you try to slam the door, it engages and gently closes shut. Between the soft-close drawers and doors, this truly gives a luxury feel to your cabinetry.

## Functional Options in the Kitchen:

Most people now want their kitchens to be both easy access and user friendly. Gone are the days of Mom cloistered off by herself in the kitchen - now we are seeing open plan kitchens that bring all the members of the family into contact with the cooking process. We need kitchens that allow for multiple users, streamlined meal prep and clean up, and even other functions beyond cooking such as homework & socializing. We often design the overall kitchen plan to accommodate multiple cooks - we provide more than one workstation, multiple sinks & designated prep areas, baking centers and planning stations.



Now for the nitty-gritty in cabinetry.

- Deep drawers and roll-out shelves allow for easy access to pots and pans. While roll-out shelves are adjustable to your changing needs, you do have to open the doors and then pull out the shelf; a two step process. A deep drawer will bring your items out in one easy step. We usually recommend that a kitchen have some of each.
- There are many nifty new drawer organization systems available now -

from integral knife blocks to dish drawer pegs. Cutlery and utensil drawer dividers are a common feature in our designs, as well as chopping block inserts. We have many here in the showroom for you to test out.

- Pantries are available in a variety of options. We have the simple and efficient shallow pantry with adjustable shelves, different options with roll-out shelves or pull-out tower racks, and the ultimate San Luis Kitchen chef's pantry – you got to see it to believe it!
- Many folks are now including a specialized bake center in their kitchens. We can provide a swing-out spice pantry, a tall cabinet with spice racks and space for small appliances, or pretty much anything you can dream up!
- Recycling and trash containment options are very hot right now. From our standard and much loved double trash to a specialized recycle cabinet with four different bins for sorting items. We have also specially designed systems for collecting composting materials in the kitchen instead of washing it all down the garbage disposal.
- Another new trend is for custom height counters. Either higher than standard for tall clients or lower for the vertically challenged. We now can make custom size cabinets for no extra charge – this has been great for clients planning to age in place or for those who may need wheelchair access to their storage.

Current kitchen design also pays close attention to the appliances chosen for the kitchen, the lighting – both task & general, and the materials used throughout the space. Let's let these be topics for another article as there is so much to say!

#### Contemporary Design for your kitchen.

Soft Contemporary design utilizes the sleek lines of modern architecture while also incorporating hints of traditional design. The soft contemporary lifestyle is imbued with comfort, simplicity, and color. We strive to create a space in which the homeowner can truly live their lives while maintaining the sensibilities of sharp & clean modern design. Let's explore three examples of Soft Contemporary kitchens.

First, in this example, we have the modern design archetype of stark black and white softened with the use of textured moss-green glass in the backsplash and a walnut butcher-block peninsula. We also muted the white on the cabinets using more of a creamy tone as opposed to the bright white walls. You can also see the use of color-blocking (defined areas of each strong color), horizontal and vertical lines, and the modern texture of glass and stainless steel.



This kitchen shows its traditional roots while embracing many elements of contemporary design. The dark cherry stain and burl details on the base cabinets, furniture style corner posts, and ceiling beam details are heavily reminiscent of the Victorian era but are tempered by the clean square lines of the doorstyle and hardware chosen and the overall sleek finishes. The high contrast given by the blond wood upper cabinets and wall paneling also lifts this design out of the past and into the contemporary design

world. We see a modern twist given to the "mantle" hood with the use of color and straight horizontal lines. My favorite detail in this kitchen is the mosaic tile splash, which echoes the progression from a dark base to a light and airy ceiling.



And in our third space, we see the extensive use of stainless steel in both appliances and cabinetry mixed with a textured wood veneer and cool blue walls. This kitchen design highlights the modern focus on linear definition and simplicity of form. The strong horizontal lines of the island and sink wall cabinets – note the shape of the cabinets, the rhythm of the handles and the wide expanses of countertops & floor space – contrast nicely with the verticality of the appliance wall. The wood tones of the cabinets and the earthy texture of the floor tiles along with the bold color of the walls pull it out of the purely modern world and into the Soft Contemporary.

As you can see, the Soft Contemporary genre has a lot to offer – our three examples are each quite different from the other. Hopefully this inspires you to pursue a soft contemporary design for your own kitchen. San Luis Kitchen will be happy to help you create the unique kitchen of your dreams.

