

Super kitchens offer more than normal appliances

BY MELISSA RAYWORTH
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

American kitchens have always served as more than cooking and eating spaces. Generations of kids have done homework at kitchen tables. Parents claim counter space to organize family miscellany, tap out work emails on laptops or install a television.

But now those work and entertainment uses are part of kitchen design from the get-go.

The era of the "super kitchen" has arrived.

"Our findings show that homeowners expect kitchen renovations to go far beyond improving flow, storage or aesthetics," said Nino Sitchinava, principal economist at Houzz.com, in announcing the site's 2016 Kitchen Trends Survey. "The 'super kitchen' has literally become a living room, family room and office, with finishes, layouts and decor that challenge us to define where the kitchen ends and the rest of the home begins."

Interior designer Mikel Welch calls the kitchen "the new epicenter of the house."

"Everybody's working from home," and they often prefer doing that in an open kitchen rather than a sequestered home office.

What are the features of a true "super kitchen?"



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This photo provided by Home Depot shows an oversized island with ample seating in a super kitchen. The era of the "super kitchen" has arrived, say interior designers and trend-watchers: People are building or remodeling kitchens that include work and entertainment space, too.

HIGH-TECH STATIONS

Designer Tiffany Brooks, host of HGTV's "Most Embarrassing Rooms in America," says homeowners want technology within easy reach, but protected from food and drink spills. Some add a built-in iPad docking area or laptop station on a counter, while others choose the less expensive option of adding a tablet dock mounted under a cabinet, with an arm that swings out.

People also want power. Pop-up outlets are being installed directly into countertops, says Sarah Fishburne, director of trend and design for the Home Depot.

Wireless "charging countertops" are also available, including LG's Tech Top and Dupont Corian. And homeowners are adding extra power outlets throughout the kitchen, and designing dedicated charging areas with power strips.

The goal, says Fishburne, is to have "many outlets readily available for anything you might need to plug in, from computer to glue gun."

Another tech choice: Dishwashers that run almost silently, so they won't distract you while you're working in the kitchen. And full-size televisions are being added to the main cooking area so you can do your binge-watching

in the same place where you try to avoid binge-eating.

The traditional focus of kitchen planning — a stove-sink-refrigerator triangle — has become a square, Welch says, with the TV added as a core necessity.

Occasionally, new kitchen technology does involve food:

"Warming drawers are huge," Brooks says. Because many people work nontraditional hours, "somebody is cooking at 2," she says, "but then somebody is eating at 5, and somebody is coming home at 9."

And some people, Welch says, "want to essentially bring Starbucks to them." Restaurant-quality

drink facilities are being added to home kitchens, including elaborate built-in tea and coffee stations, built-in soda systems, faucets with a sparkling water spigot and temperature-controlled wine refrigerators.

MORE SURFACES, MORE SEATING, MORE STORAGE

"An emerging trend is two islands being incorporated into a kitchen, if there is space," says Fishburne. "This allows for a prep island and an island to accommodate other family functions like work or homework while you are preparing dinner."

Several of Welch's design clients have requested oversized countertops that "allow six to eight people to comfortably sit with barstools," he says.

Lounging-friendly seating is a priority, whether or not guests will be eating. If a kitchen doesn't have space for a sectional sofa or other large seating, some homeowners are knocking down walls to merge the kitchen with other rooms. Houzz says half of its survey respondents reported making their kitchens more open to other indoor spaces.

And along with opening up the kitchen to the rest of the house, many homeowners are

decorating the kitchen to match other rooms.

"The kitchen is becoming a lot prettier," Brooks says. "It is what the living room was" years ago.

The kitchen backsplash area can be a creative showcase, the designers say, using custom-made tiles or even antique mirrored glass.

Kitchen storage, too, is becoming more stylish and more organized. Closet-design systems originally conceived for bedroom closets are now being used to organize kitchen cabinets and pantries, Brooks says.

And rather than cramming work papers or family files into a cabinet designed for dishes, designers are building office and crafts storage into the kitchen. Many kitchens now have desks or computer workstations, and the days of bringing in "horrible, chunky rolling cabinets" to store files is over, says Welch.

Non-kitchen items are stored in "built-ins that match the rest of the kitchen."

Whether they're asking for the most flattering lighting or details like high-end brass cabinet pulls, clients want everything to be beautiful, Welch says. More than ever, they want "that visual 'wow' factor."

Pizza ovens are becoming hot for the kitchen or backyard

BY KAREN SCHWARTZ
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LAS VEGAS — Pizza Hut is fine when you feel like going out. But pizza home is the newest trend, with pizza ovens designed for the kitchen or backyard.

This spring, one of the most recognizable names in home appliances will go after a piece of that pie when GE Monogram starts selling a \$10,000 electric, residential wall model designed to fit into the space of a standard 30-inch wall oven.

"We saw a considerable market gap when it came to the available at-home options for pizza enthusiasts and home chefs," said Wayne Davis, commercial leader at FirstBuild, a subsidiary of GE Appliances.

GE fired up its oven and cooked pizza in the middle of the Las Vegas Convention Center at this year's recent Kitchen and Bath Industry Show.

Sure, their professional chef made it look easy, but like most people, I'd never used a pizza oven. I didn't even know that the tool used to pull pizza in and out of the

oven is called a "peel."

Wondering what it's like to use a pizza oven at home, I gave a propane-powered, outdoor, countertop Napoli Pizza Oven from Lynx Grills a try.

Like others, the Napoli has a stainless exterior, a pizza stone, and a stone-like interior designed to reflect heat like a brick oven. It requires about 30 minutes or so to heat to an internal temperature of 700 degrees or more.

After that, a Neapolitan-style pizza should cook in a matter of minutes, but the ovens also can be adjusted to cook other styles of pizza and calzone.

The Napoli was at the mercy of the elements, and my experiment was interrupted by high winds and cool ambient temperature. Working around the environmental curveballs and my own inexperience, I eventually made some misshapen pies that were certainly better than frozen, with a nice crunchy crust. But whether it was the recipe or the receptacle, they weren't quite on par with the ones from my favorite pizzeria, where pizza-making has been a family tradition for



Associated Press

The Napoli Pizza Oven, pictured here in January 2015, can be used to make various types of pizza, calzone, pot roast, bread and fajitas.

generations.

In addition to the \$4,000 countertop model, the Napoli also comes paired with a free-standing cart at \$6,500 for the set.

Another company, Kalamazoo Outdoor Gourmet, has a \$6,900 outdoor countertop model called the Artisan Fire Pizza Oven that can be packed up for a tail-gate party.

"It comes in three layers. Each layer can be easily unstacked and moved by one person," said company

spokesman Bradley Carlson.

"It's not only about the grill anymore," he said. "People are becoming more sophisticated in terms of what they're cooking outdoors."

Last year, the company unveiled a version of the Artisan Fire Pizza Oven that can be built into brick, stone or concrete for a clean look in an outdoor kitchen. It costs \$8,300, plus installation.

At the kitchen show, Kalamazoo debuted an \$11,000 "rolling pizza station"

that holds the Artisan Fire oven and features built-in bins for storing toppings.

Kalamazoo's Artisan Fire differs in both form and function from the Lynx Napoli, so consumers should do their homework and investigate the scores of pizza-oven options available today from specialty shops and hardware stores.

Will homeowners really spend thousands of dollars on pizza ovens?

Hard to predict. On any given day, 13 percent of the country's population age 2 and older eats pizza, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. And the number of people making pizza at home using store-bought dough accounted for nearly 10 percent of pizza sales in 2015, up from 3 percent in 2013, according to Consumer Reports.

While most of that was likely not baked in a fancy pizza oven, the good news for homeowners is that should they tire of pizza, the manufacturers say the outdoor ovens can also be used for roasting foods, baking breads or making fajitas.

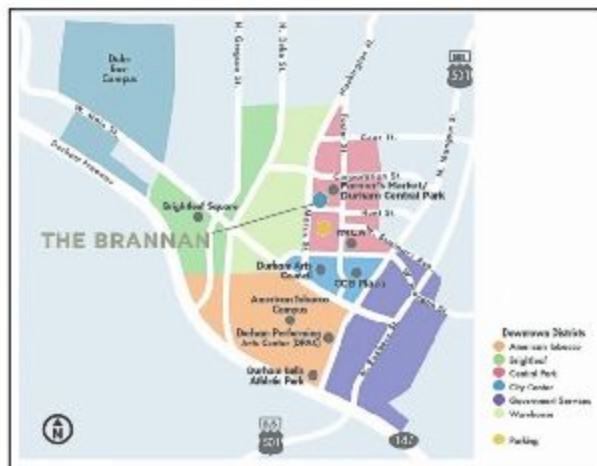
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FROM PAGE A8

Durham's dynamic lifestyle. A terrific benefit to residents will be the "walkability" of the property to Durham Central Park, the Farmer's Market, Carolina Theatre, the YMCA, Durham Performing Arts Center, Durham Bulls Athletic Park, and a plethora of shops and restaurants. Duke University and major thoroughfares are also nearby, allowing convenience to all points of the Triangle.

"We are very pleased to be here," says Henry Lambert, founder of Lambert Development. "We've enjoyed success with similar projects in other parts of the county, and we're excited to become a part of Downtown Durham." Recent projects by Lambert Development are located in Los Angeles, Pasadena, San Diego, and San Francisco, California; Denver, Colorado; and Cap-Ferrat, France.

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Submitted photo

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