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NAHB REMODELER OF THE YEAR

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The Kitchen Workhorse

Consumers spend more time working at the sink than any area of the kitchen. Design, functionality and configurations have evolved to keep pace with myriad demands.

By Laurie Banyay

Function is king in nearly any product nowadays. Multifunctional is even better. It comes as little surprise then that the kitchen sink — traditionally just a one- or two-bowl vessel — has evolved into an area where multiple kitchen tasks can be performed with ease and efficiency. Although multifunction is a key attribute in sinks, it is not at the expense of beauty and myriad stylistic options to satisfy any customer demand.

STYLE

“Over the past five years we have seen a definite increase in the popularity of single-bowl sinks,” says Lou Rohl, CEO and managing partner of Rohl. “Part of this might be due to the engineering of today’s dishwashers. Unlike 20 to 30 years ago, there isn’t as much of a need to have a double-bowl sink to wash and rinse large pots and pans or even delicate glassware. Everything can be loaded into the dishwasher. These single-bowl sinks are also larger and deeper. They are the focal point of the kitchen.”

Rohl believes the sink will continue to play an increased role in kitchens. “With more and more time spent in the kitchen, so increases the amount of daily use at the kitchen sink,” he says. “We believe it’s the most-used appliance in your kitchen. When you stop to think about how often you use your sink in comparison to

other appliances in the kitchen, it’s surprising. For a family of four, it could be up to 20 times a day. That’s why it’s so important to invest in a sink crafted from quality materials. People don’t think twice about investing in a range, which they may use a few times a week. Why not invest in their sink, which gets four to five times as much daily use.”

Farmhouse, or apron style, sinks have taken off in popularity in past years. Blanco, Rohl,



ROHL concentrates on quality of material and ease of installation for its kitchen sinks. Single-bowl and farmhouse-style sinks are surging in popularity. **Circle 4 on inquiry card**

Kohler, Sterling, Elkay and Franke all note this style’s popularity surge. “Farmhouse sink styles continue to capture consumer interest and are a staple of any sink line,” says Christy Emens, marketing manager for Blanco. “They make the sink a focal point in the room.”

The most popular styles for Blanco are contemporary undermount sinks with a single-bowl. “Blanco artisans have made a craft of the square sink with no visible weld lines



THE GALLEY offers six workstations and the ability to create a customized one. Each workstation includes several integrated accessories and creates a space where meal prep and cleanup can be completed in one area. **Circle 5 on inquiry card**

as modern design is prevailing in the kitchen today,” says Emens. She also observes the low divide in double-bowl sinks are popular. “The single-bowl offers an uncluttered contemporary look, but some consumers still desire separate spaces for prepping and cleaning,” she explains. “The low divide is an ergonomic and visually appealing solution.”

Fausto Samaniego, product manager luxury group for Franke Kitchen Systems, notes the surge in demand for minimal inside radius sink designs, which he also refers to as hand-fabricated or rectangular sinks. “These sinks are a perfect fit for today’s transitional to modern kitchen designs. I anticipate this design trend continuing over the coming years as our market research points toward designs that include simple, clean and transitional design elements.” Samaniego also notes the minimal radii make cleaning much easier and prevent accumulation of “gunk.”

WORKSTATIONS AND ACCESSORIES

When Scott Anderson, CEO of The Galley, purchased the company about one and a half years ago, he realized the kitchen sink was the most used appliance and, as such, needed to be reinvented. Together with partner David Kotowsky, they re-engineered the sink to become a multifunctional area they refer to as a workstation.

Kotowsky says there aren’t a lot of differences in kitchen sinks — they all primarily are vessels with a drain, albeit in varying configurations. The space a sink takes up is counter space lost. With a workstation, however, the consumer can effectively prepare meals start to finish in one area. Whereas the typical kitchen sink makes the user face a wall, the workstations often are installed facing outward on islands or peninsulas, encouraging staying engaged with people, especially when entertaining.



“Much like cabinetry, countertops and appliances have evolved, we think it’s time for the kitchen sink to evolve into something much more useful in the kitchen. This is the natural evolution of the kitchen sink,” Anderson says. “If you believe the kitchen is the hub of the home, which we do, then this is the hub of the hub.”

Workstations are offered in standard 5-, 6- or 7-ft. lengths, and accessories are integrated in the system. Standard accessories include a cutting board, drain rack, platforms for colanders and mixing bowls. Optional accessories



include the dual-tier serving board, wash sink (that turns a single bowl into a double bowl), chopping block and ice divider.

The 4-ft. workstation is popular in major urban markets like New York. “When space is limited, our workstation becomes essential,” Kotowsky says. Conversely, the “bigger the workstation the more functional it becomes. Bigger is better in our case because you can use more of the accessories, and two people can work simultaneously.”

Most sink manufacturers offer some variety of accessories. Elkay, for example, presents a number of designed-to-fit accessories such as bottom grids, cutting boards, rinsing baskets and utensil caddies. The company’s SinkMate converts stainless steel sinks into an organized and efficient one that can hold sponges, cleaning brushes and detergent in easy-to-reach locations.

Kohler and Sterling have found kitchen sinks are evolving into deeper bowls to allow for more functionality and the inclusion of accessories. “People are looking to larger basin sinks, allowing the support of large specialty cookware to fit within,” say Eric Moore and Erika Spangers, interior designers at Kohler Design Center. “We see a growing interest in the all-in-one units, with the integration of

faucets and storage. Kohler’s Prolific sink is a great example, with its tier-leveled system that incorporates cutting boards, colanders, soaking bowls and racks into the sink basin space itself.”

“We like to talk about livable design,” Emens, from Blanco, says. “This is an organic design between contemporary and traditional — focused on ease of use, eof maintenance,



KOHLER and its sister company, **STERLING**, have found deeper sinks to accommodate accessories to be a trend. Secondary sinks also are growing in popularity, including home bars and butler pantries. **Circle 6 on inquiry card**

durability and multitasking. The sink is the hardest working fixture in the kitchen. Once installed, it’s a place for the life of the countertop/kitchen. We’ve added complete lines of accessories to many of our popular sinks so consumers can customize their work space to store utensils, cleaning supplies, integrate cutting boards and colanders to make prep easier and save space. The sink is evolving into a workstation, not just a vessel.”

SECONDARY SINKS

As important as primary sinks are, many kitchens include secondary sinks. “Secondary sinks are a really exciting area for us. Consumers are incredibly creative with the usage of these sinks, installing not only in the kitchen, but also in



BLANCO focuses on livable design when creating kitchen sinks. This is an organic design between contemporary and traditional that focuses on ease of use, maintenance, durability and multitasking. **Circle 7 on inquiry card**