



Left two and top photos by **CHRISTOPHER DAVISON**



THE NEW MARKET:

SAVVY CONSUMERS ARE OPEN TO OPTIONS AND UNIVERSAL DESIGN TRENDS

Photography by **CASEY FRY**

Home improvement activity has paralleled the recovery of the housing market. In fact, the Central Texas region is quite robust and has put kitchen remodels and their relatively high ROI and enjoyment back in the spotlight. The combination of low financing costs, stronger consumer confidence and the stabilization of home prices are encouraging homeowners to exuberantly approach home improvement projects with kitchen remodels leading the way.

However, the recent lean economy has given birth to a much more astute consumer. Today's homeowners no longer want to settle for mediocre designs. They are demanding smarter solutions, adaptive spaces, timeless, low maintenance materials and exceptional workmanship. The consumers' new interest in

quality design/build solutions with companies that have proven track records has created an environment for one particular Austin-based Design/Build team to excel.

Realty Restoration, LLC and Twelve Stones Designs have developed a nationally award-winning design/build relationship. "We often refer to our approach as "The Trifecta," says David Davison, certified remodeler and president of Realty Restoration, LLC. "Our National NARI CotY Award received earlier this year spotlighted our team's ability to deliver spectacular kitchen renovations by utilizing the 'team' approach. By engaging our architect, builder and interior designer team in the initial stages of meetings with the client, we are all on the same page from day one."

"There are typically two schools of thought that resonate with our clients today," says Christy Bowen, certified kitchen and bath designer and owner of Twelve Stones Designs. "They are either wondering, 'How can I upgrade my kitchen for my own personal enjoyment with a close eye on resell ability?' or 'How can I find materials and designs that will age with me if I'm going to be in my home for an extended timeframe?'"

"Our award-winning kitchen designs utilize very specific storage solutions to address these questions, such as spice rack pullouts, skillet storage, pots and pans drawers, knife drawers with universal acceptability, baking centers and cabinet-style pantries which contribute to the cooking experience," explains David Davison. Additionally, the team routinely incorporates the concepts of "aging in place" or "universal design" so the space will transcend physical and age differences, thus making it more appealing to potential buyers in the future while providing a pleasant cooking, dining and entertaining experience for the current homeowner.

Embracing new design trends can also help a home design of today remain fresh and current for tomorrow's market. Christopher Davison, A.I.A., and architectural services lead for the team, says one such trend involves opening up the kitchen to provide a

free flowing space to support family unity. To achieve this, the walls between the kitchen and living areas are removed, usually at the cost of storage space those walls traditionally provided. The team addresses this issue by applying design concepts to create better, more functional storage solutions that operate organically and effortlessly within the new kitchen system. "While wall cabinets have been the 'norm' for decades, they are not always the most functional storage arrangement, especially for people of petite stature. And for tall people, base cabinet storage is a pain (sometimes literally) to access. Our team designs spaces with deep storage cabinets and full extension roll-out drawers. You actually gain much more accessible storage for people of all heights and physical abilities," says Christopher Davison.

Other popular kitchen amenities include island counters with very detailed utilization concepts and banquet seating around the perimeter, ultimately becoming the "magnet" that draws guests when entertaining. The banquette, essentially a table with built-in bench seating, provides streamlined seating plus essential storage for tablecloths, place mats and other items. A cushioned bench enhances the comfort and adds a splash of style with fabric. Designs that include beverage centers, ice, water and even liquor storage drawers help eliminate the problem of guests occupying the cook's space in the kitchen.

"Our number one goal during presentations to potential clients is to show them how our team delivers projects on a timely basis, with cost effective and comprehensive problem-solving solutions which avoids cost increases during the construction phase," says David Davison. "By concentrating on the details of smarter solutions, our clients are left with an amazing kitchen and living space that they are proud to show off to their friends and family. This process can be a fun and enlightening experience and create lasting relationships along the way." ❖

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