

Chicago Life

MAGAZINE



PHILANTHROPY GUIDE

ECONOMICS OF INEQUALITY | CHICAGO'S SOLAR FUTURE
SMART KITCHENS | SELECTING A COLLEGE

ADVERTISING SUPPLEMENT TO THE WALL STREET JOURNAL • HOLIDAY 2015

Smart Kitchens

BY PAMELA DITTMER MCKUEN

The Kitchen of Tomorrow has arrived, almost. Robots aren't preparing our dinners and cleaning up afterward, but modern kitchens are amazingly intelligent. Technological advances and sophisticated design features are making our culinary lives easier, more efficient and a lot more fun.

Shirley Hood, appliance expert at Abt Electronics in Glenview, said if she had to use one word to describe the current state of kitchen wizardry, it would be "Innovative!" The exclamation point is hers.

"Manufacturers are always trying to find ways to make the next product better than the last," she said. "We are not in the Jetsons era yet, but with each passing year, you are going to find more and more appliances that are connected and intuitive."

Consumers are willingly embracing the newest models. Whether updating the kitchens in their "forever homes" or thinking about selling down the road, they are increasingly informed about what they want. One smart appliance often leads to another and another.

DESIGNING FOR NEW CONSTRUCTION

WaterSound Origins is a new planned community of luxury single-family homes on Northwest Florida's Emerald Coast. It's where builder Jason Romair of Romair Homes offers buyers an optional upgrade of restaurant-grade Wolf and Sub-Zero appliances. The second phase of 100 homes is now under construction.

Romair's Weatherly model, a 4-bedroom, 4 1/2-bath Cape Cod style home, showcases the upgrades. The refrigerator is fully integrated, meaning its doors are paneled to match the cabinetry, so it seems to disappear. The microwave is tucked discreetly in an island drawer; it has a tilt-out control panel viewed while standing. The 36-inch, six-burner gas Wolf range comes with convection option, and two of the burners may be exchanged for a grill or griddle.

Ninety-percent of WaterSound Origins buyers choose the upgrade, Romair said.

"People expect quality in appliances and materials in the level of houses we are selling at WaterSound Origins," he said. "They use their kitchens more than any other room in the home. It's where homework is done and where cocktail parties are experienced. They want to spend money in the areas where they will be spending their time."

DESIGNING FOR RESALE

Jenn Kim is not only a Chicago-based Redfin real estate agent, she's also a tech junkie who loves to cook. Some of her favorite up-and-coming appliances: Touch screens. Remote controls. Refrigerators that suggest recipes based on the food inside. Anything that reduces energy consumption.

"There are two main things high-tech appliances provide for consumers," she said. "They are more energy-efficient, and they make things faster. People are busier than ever."

If you're wondering whether to upgrade before putting your home on the market, the answer is yes.

"Even for those who don't spend a lot of time cooking, the kitchen is the center of the home, literally and figuratively, especially in condos, which are very open," she said.

When the kitchen has been updated or the appliances



Kitchen appliances installed in the Weatherly model at WaterSound Origins on Northwest Florida's Emerald Coast. Photo: Modus Photography.

are high-end, buyers have the feeling the entire home is high-end, she said.

“A lot more home buyers are looking for move-in ready homes,” she said. “In the past, they were looking for something cheaper and they would do the upgrades, but not today. Especially in condos where there are so many time limitations on when workers can get in, and they have to get pre-approvals. In many cases, both partners are working.”

WHAT'S NEW AND TRENDING

The biggest advances are in the area of wireless communication between you and your appliance. Download the corresponding app to your smartphone or tablet, and you can tell it what to do while you're at the office or mingling with guests in the back yard.

This fall Jenn-Air introduced a dual convection wall oven that is the brand's first with wireless connectivity. The Culinary Center app, accessible via smartphone, tablet or the appliance's 7-inch touch LCD display, considers such options as food type, desired doneness and type of cookware or bakeware used. Color images illustrating doneness levels are combined with visuals showing how and where to insert the temperature probe for a variety of dishes.

“Even for those who don't spend a lot of time cooking, the kitchen is the center of the home, literally and figuratively...”

“Hit ‘Start,’ and your food comes out just like the picture,” said Jenn-Air general manager Steve Brown in Benton Harbor, Mich. “We know many people today don't have a lot of experience cooking large meals, but when they do, it's probably a special event, and they want to do it right.”

APPLIANCES ARE MULTI-TASKERS

No need to have an appliance, large or small, for every task. Now you can buy one oven with traditional and convection options, it steam- and slow-cooks bakes bread with perfectly crispy crust.

For limited spaces, choose a free-standing double oven or a compact, 24-inch combination unit with traditional, convection and microwave options, Hood said.

Refrigerators have door-in-door features to give quick access to on-the-go items. Some have convertible freezers that convert to refrigeration storage when needed. Black interiors with LED showcase lighting, like Jenn-Air's Built-in French Door Refrigerator, makes food appear more aesthetically pleasing. Dual-zoned alcoholic beverage coolers can accommodate the temperature sensitivities of both wine and craft beer.

Another newcomer is the GE Café Series French Door Refrigerator with built-in hot water dispenser and Keurig K-cup brewing system. It makes fresh coffee right in the refrigerator door. The hot water dispenser has four pre-programmed settings for the most common foods and drinks and can be scheduled with the GE Kitchen App.

Many refrigerators “have water filters, which not only eliminate the need to purchase bottled water, but now many of the models have

Jenn-Air 42-inch Built-in French Door Refrigerator with Obsidian Interior.

Jenn-Air 30-inch Connected Double Wall Oven with MultiMode Convection System.

Photos: Jenn-Air

air filters that eliminate the transfer of food odors in your fridge,” Hood said.

Dishwashers are running faster and more powerfully than ever. Some are equipped with side jets for extra vigorous washing and interior lighting. Coming soon is a viewing window, so you know when your dishes are done, Hood said.

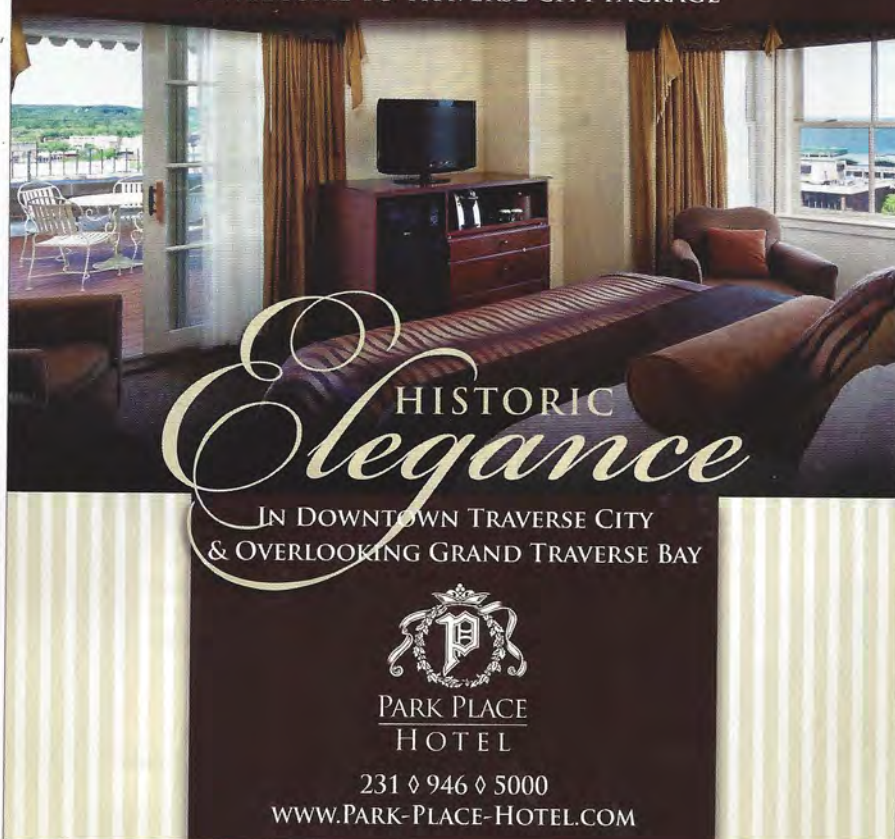
SMALL APPLIANCES GO BIG

Smaller appliances and other kitchen accoutrements also are stepping up their games. The T-fal OptiGrill Plus is an indoor grill with a built-in sensor that automatically adapts to the thickness of your food and delivers perfect doneness from rare to well done for six different programs: burgers, poultry, sandwiches, sausage and pork, red meat and fish. It also will defrost and cook in one quick step.


The Grohe Blue Chilled and Sparkling faucet has a built-in carbonator, so you can have instant still or sparkling water. The



MENTION THIS AD WHEN MAKING YOUR RESERVATION & RECEIVE
A WELCOME TO TRAVERSE CITY PACKAGE



HISTORIC Elegance
IN DOWNTOWN TRAVERSE CITY
& OVERLOOKING GRAND TRAVERSE BAY


**PARK PLACE
HOTEL**

231 ♦ 946 ♦ 5000
WWW.PARK-PLACE-HOTEL.COM

Belkin Crock-Pot Smart Slow Cooker with WeMo can be turned on or off or temperature-adjusted with your smartphone.

Window shades, too, have gone high tech. Hunter Douglas has created intelligent shades that can be operated automatically and autonomously. The brand new PowerView Motorization line features app-based scheduling features that can be programmed to adjust one room or an entire home of window treatments on demand. Operate them through a remote-control device, a wall-mounted touch panel or your smartphone or tablet. They can be programmed to coordinate with sunrise and sunset times in your location.

Remotely controlling the patio blinds or the crockpot is one thing. Controlling an entire environment is quite another. The Crestron Pyng is an automated wireless system that adjusts temperature, lighting, audio, window shades, security cameras and more, all from a touch-screen control panel, smartphone or tablet.

"Pyng is the command center that brings all these things together, depending on what is important in your home," said Fred Bargetzi, chief technology officer at Rockleigh, N.J.-based Crestron Electronics. "There is so much functionality and convenience available at your fingertips. As people become more comfortable with this technology, they come to expect it."

Although Crestron Pyng is not a traditional kitchen appliance like, say a stove or dishwasher, Bargetzi believes it should be.

"We are one of the appliances of the kitchen you need," he said. "Many homes have a lot of these things, but they are disparate. Everything has its own individual app. We call it 'app clutter.' Pyng brings them all together."

LINKING IT ALL TOGETHER

For now, anyway, we have to live with some degree of app clutter. We have the ability to communicate wirelessly with our appliances, and they can communicate with us, but they don't yet have the ability to communicate with each other. The day is sure to arrive, and when they do, they'll intuitively make hundreds of decisions a day without our input or knowledge.

"Wireless is at kind of a bold new frontier we as an industry are only starting to understand," Brown said. "I believe we are at a pivotal point. Kitchens every couple of decades enter a transition, and I think we are entering a new period of that."

"More and more, home automation isn't a luxury. It's becoming a necessity," Bargetzi said. □

Nature's Precious Treasures

Adopt
-A-
Manatee®
for the
Holidays



Call 1-800-432-5646 (JOIN)
savethemanatee.org

Photo © David Schrichte

Creating **opportunities** for students to **engage** with **scientists** & **explore**
SCIENCE!



Challenge Grant: STRENGTHEN OUR STEM!
Help us raise \$25,000 and we can double that to \$50,000!!!

www.projectexploration.org

CONVENE BY 12/31/15

Project Exploration empowers and mentors underrepresented youth through science, technology and engineering out-of-school-time experiential programs led by university students and skilled professionals.

