

Designers Discuss 'Must Have' Elements for Kitchens and Baths

Kitchen & Bath Design News recently posed this question to dealers and designers in the kitchen and bath industry: "What is one 'must have' element for every space you design?"

"For my kitchen clients, a 'must-have' that I always include is a double pull-out trash receptacle. This provides them with one can for recycling and one can for trash in an easy-to-operate, slide-out system. When the budget can permit, we even add a hands-free system that only requires the tap of a knee and the system rolls out. This is great when you have a handful of slimy chicken skins to toss in the trash. As for baths, the 'must-have' would have to be a shampoo niche built into the wall of the shower. We've also added a soap shelf that can house a bar of soap, which is a great way to keep things tidy and contained."

Natalie Miller, CKD, CID
Interior Focus
Elk Grove, CA

"Being a kitchen designer for 26 years now, the most common 'must haves' for the kitchen would be pot and pan drawers for easy accessibility and practical storage as a main 'tool' for preparing meals."

Caroline Yamin, kitchen & bath designer/project manager
Boca Kitchens & Floors
Boca Raton, FL

"I like to include a trash can drawer or hamper drawer in the cabinetry design. This allows the bathroom/kitchen to look cleaner and less cluttered. The trash can drawer works great for the kitchen, but both work for the bathroom."

Tina Beauchain, CEO
Beauchain Builders, Inc.
Sterling, VA

"We have been doing more baths recently, and one constant design element asked for is a shower niche as part of the tile design, or multiple niches to keep the room tidy and everything in its place."

Ray Ramelli, owner
Ramelli Building & Remodeling
Wallingford, CT

"The one 'must have' element in every space is a wow factor. Sometimes it is just a little wow...like 'wow, where did you find that really cool vanity light?' Sometimes it's a big WOW...like 'WOW, that countertop is awesome!' Specifically, I think there always needs to be at least one black item.

Somehow that one black accent makes a statement that is only noticed when it is missing."

Jo Meacham, owner/designer
Urban Kitchens
Oklahoma City, OK

"A must have in the shower is a recessed shampoo box for storing essential items."

Jimmy Calhoun, president
DATE Construction
The Woodlands, TX

"My must-have is a glamorous 'junk drawer' space! Rather than trying to ignore the inevitable, I like to include a dedicated space for all of the knick-knacks, pens and key rings. The 'junk drawer' comes into existence in the first place because of all of those small-scale odds and ends that don't have a place to live, so they all just get cluttered together. Instead, I like to address the issue directly and design a designated spot for the 'junk,' to promote organization on even the small scale in the new and enhanced kitchen. One of the most important elements to design into a kitchen is a beautifully functional and lavishly workable prep space. Whether it's on the island or between the sink and the stove, one of my absolute 'must haves' is a countertop space large enough to comfortably work. It's a bonus if you have the space for an overhang for seating in the same area as your prep space. This allows your friends and family to be involved (but out of the way) as you're readying anything from a quick breakfast before work to delicious Thanksgiving feasts."

Stephanie Brick Barch, LEED GA,
Associate AIA
Nicely Done Kitchens & Baths
Springfield, VA

"My 'must have' for every kitchen I design is large drawers. Large 30"- to 36"-wide bases with three drawers have replaced roll-out tray bases almost exclusively. It's much easier to roll out a drawer with one hand than to open two doors, then roll out the tray. Also, nothing falls off of a drawer and pan handles don't get caught on anything. They are great for towels in the bathroom, too!"

Colleen Vanderhovel, owner
Dream Kitchens, LLC
Howell, MI

"The right lighting is always a must have. Whether it is toe kick lighting on a motion switch for night lights in bathrooms, LED undercabinet lighting for kitchens, decorative or functional lighting, direct or indirect lighting, the perfect lighting design will be the ultimate end to showcase all of the other materials and work."

Jan O'Brien, CKD, Allied ASID
Arizona Designs Kitchens and Baths
Tucson, AZ

"For a bathroom, a 'must have' – and one that I do in 90% of my bathroom remodels – is heated floors. For kitchens, there are many elements that I consider to be 'must haves.' One of them is the mixer/appliance lift that is integrated in the cabinet, as well as undermount receptacles that mount on the bottom of a wall cabinet. This way the backsplash becomes a great focal point without the distraction of plugs and plates."

Marcos Mendoza, founder/designer
BVC Designs
Louisville, KY

"A 'must have' in a kitchen would be a refrigerator drawer installed in the island for convenience. In a bathroom, it's a radiant floor heating system with an adjustable thermostat. These are the recurring special requests from my clients lately."

Patrice Belkowiche, owner
Deko Fino Remodeling Company
Rancho Santa Margarita, CA

"More than ever before, our clients are looking for creative use of space for storage purposes in kitchens and baths. Our suppliers have been doing a fairly good job of keeping up with storage options and trends, but a lot of times custom-built are the only option. Especially with the increasing popularity of Houzz, we are getting more and more photo-accompanied requests asking 'Can you do this?'"

Nate Bahm, CGR, CAPS, president
Nate's Custom Renovations, Inc.
Lincoln, NE

"The backsplash is very important. Sometimes less is more. However, with all of the new and exciting materials available today, adding color and texture can turn a simple look into an exotic statement. I always recommend choosing the backsplash after all of the cabinetry and tops are in. Then you can choose the exact tile to achieve the look that is right for your space."

Laura Wallace, owner
Kitchen Design by Laura
Sarasota, FL