

Bite Sized

KITCHENS



As Rachael Ray constructs 30-minute meals, she steps over to the notice-me-pale yellow '50s-era refrigerator, and reaches in for ingredients. She turns her attention back to the fired-up range, tossing vegetables over the heat. But it's not her technique or bill of fare that has some tuning in.

BY JENNIFER SHAPIRA

RETRO DEALERS

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"I don't watch 'Rachael Ray' for the menus," says Barbara Smith. "I watch to see what kind of refrigerator she has, if it's orange or turquoise. All her kitchens are multicolored—yellow and orange—and visually appealing."

Ray may have cornered the market on retro-style kitchens, bringing that look into our homes weeknights at the dinner hour—excellent timing. President and owner of Bars and Booths in Charles Town, W.Va., Smith says retro-style appliances have become much more en vogue in recent years. The company not only restores antique appliances and builds classic diner reproductions, but it is also a dealer of 1950s-style appliances from both Ontario-based Elmira Stove Works and Colorado's Big Chill.

"People love to show off their retro kitchens because not everyone has one," says Smith. The look offers an exciting color scheme, she says, yet it also evokes nostalgia. To Smith, those feelings are: "happy, peaceful, warm and fuzzy."

Cut to 6 o'clock when the neighborhood kids would run home for dinner, Mom in her apron serving the roast, Dad folding the paper, the nuclear family gathering around the table.

"The '50s were a wonderful era of happy home life," says Smith, adding, "a lot of people are in love with the appliances and in love with the '50s."

So it makes perfect sense that the appliance colors delight the eye, and to the ear the names sound like frozen treats: Buttercup Yellow, Pink Lemonade, Cherry Red, Robin's Egg Blue, Mint Green, and Quicksilver.

"The '50s were a wonderful era of happy home life, of kitchens, a lot of people are in love with the appliances, in love with the '50s."

to stainless steel. Though mixing vivid appliances with stainless steel is common, those who choose a fire-engine-red refrigerator, or even a slick black model with its minimalist chrome details is going for a statement, says Tony Dowling, business development manager at Elmira Stove Works, manufacturer of the Northstar line.

"I think people are getting tired of the same old, same old," says Dowling. "What we've seen a lot of over the years is white appliances. Now what we've seen is certainly an abundance of stainless steel. And there's a certain segment of the population that says, 'You know what? I really want something different.'"

And a big chunk of that population is forking over the funds for red refrigerators, Dowling says of Northstar's top-selling color. Robin's Egg Blue and Buttercup Yellow are closely tied for second place. The Northstar line includes two large refrigerator sizes, and a more compact, 11-cubic-foot version that Dowling says is a popular sell in New York apartments or in cottages where putting in a full-size fridge is not an option.

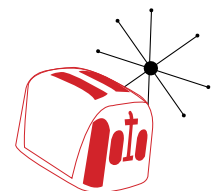
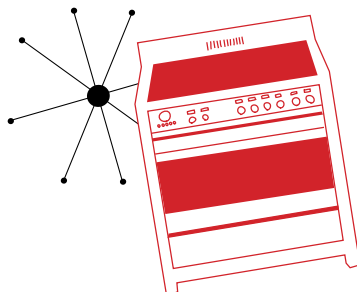
While small might be convenient at times, no one goes for the retro look because the size is right; they select it for the high-gloss, wow factor. It's about expressing your individuality, says Dowling.

In Living Color

Falls Church resident Rae Arduini agrees. Her friends consider her Robin's Egg Blue Northstar refrigerator to be the "jewel" of her condominium. How the fridge found

Express Yourself

From ranges to refrigerators to dishwashers, many homeowners are seeking pastel or bright-colored alternatives





a home in this cucumber-cool condo is what kitchen love stories are made of. At the time of her home's complete redo, Arduini's fridge had broken, so she was in the market for a smaller-scale, slick new model.

Arlington-based interior designer Dolly Howarth found inspiration in a turquoise rug that lay on Arduini's living room floor prior to the redecoration. It is one of Arduini's favorite shades, and as luck would have it, the Northstar was a dead-on match. Howarth tracked down the 29-inch cool-blue baby, and nestled it right into her neutral but chic galley kitchen.

When Arduini saw it, it was love at first sight. Now considered her home's focal point, it sits adjacent to a pop-art portrait of Audrey Hepburn in Arduini's flexible dining area-slash-office space. All cool blues and icy tones, touches of red make for colorful splashes in this stylish space.

"It's small-scale," says Howarth of the statement refrigerator. And it set a sleek, modern,

retro tone for the rest of the condo, she says, while adding "a little bit of art deco glamour."

Understanding Small Spaces

Brian McGarry, an Alexandria-based designer and small-kitchen enthusiast, knows first-hand about living in tight quarters. "I live in a 16-foot duplex, so I understand small spaces," he says.

Operating in a diminutive kitchen doesn't have to be a compromise. It's a matter of maximizing creativity, design and movement. And now, more than ever, appliance manufacturers are producing lines for smaller dwellings. It is

"People don't want what everyone else has."

possible to have all the form, function and style of a gourmet kitchen, but on a much smaller scale.

McGarry recalls a kitchen he recently completed for a high-rise condo in Washington, D.C.'s, Penn Quarter. The woman's kitchen also included the apartment's living space. McGarry placed an integrated refrigerator and freezer in the kitchen's island, rendering it completely out of the line of vision. "A stand-up refrigerator would have broken up that space terribly," he says. In addition, a sleek 18-inch cabinet-front dishwasher fits into the footprint. The blue-green 1-by-1-inch mosaic tile backsplash adds punch, and sculptural drawer pulls add a touch of whimsy.

Choosing appliances that match counter depth is another key to good design. "I liken the refrigerators when they stick out to flood pants," says McGarry. "They just look bad."

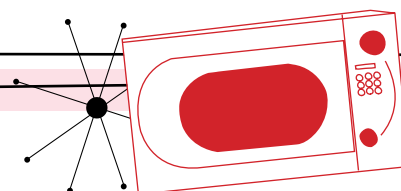
McGarry is also a firm believer in European-style frameless cabinets. The look is generally sleeker and more modern, and "the advan-

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tage of space is tremendous,” he says. Frames on cabinets and drawers can add inches where space and storage is crucial.

“What I look out for when I design a kitchen is to protect the cook,” he says. The cook needs access to the sink, a prep area and a cooking space. On the other side of the sink is the dishwasher and a cabinet where all the plates and silverware can get put away, he says. “And if you can do that, the kitchen functions.”

Small Footprints

As the population ages, a number of couples who may have raised families in the Northern Virginia suburbs are looking to downsize. Some empty nesters are moving into condos in the more urban areas of Arlington and Alexandria.

“People who have lived in the Washington area, and specifically in D.C., moved out to the suburbs when they had children and are familiar with the urban life and would like to go back in,” says Rhonda Grisham, an interior designer at Kleppinger Design in Fairfax. Grisham says some clients currently rent their apartments in anticipation of one day moving back.

Such a move is appealing for all the obvious reasons, she says: There’s no grass to mow, there’s often covered parking, and Metro, shops and restaurants are located steps away. It’s a more European lifestyle, one in which you can’t necessarily stock the fridge and freezer for months at a time.

Empty nesters may no longer need kitchens with double ovens, large eat-in areas, or Sub-Zero fridges. They, and single dwellers, can make do with small-scale appliances, tighter work spaces and flexible seating. Creative choices, such as space-sav-

Q&A

with Rae Arduini

Falls Church resident and condo owner Rae Arduini worked with Arlington-based interior designer Dolly Howarth to create a cool, stylish oasis from an otherwise busy work life. Using icy blue tones, art deco glamour and a feminine touch, the finished product, though small, is functional, flexible and fabulous.

What do you love about your kitchen?

I love the mixture of retro with the turquoise refrigerator and toaster and the modern/industrial elements: the stainless stove, range hood, dishwasher, sink and faucet; white lacquer cabinets; gray Corian countertop; exposed bulbs and stainless high-tech track lighting and the frosted sliding glass barn door.

How does it make you feel to be in that space?

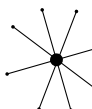
My kitchen is completely minimalist. Because my personal life and work life are so hectic—it feels good to work in a kitchen with a floor plan and materials that simplify my life. It’s very calming.

What is the reaction when you have guests?

Anyone that comes to my house is most impressed with the retro refrigerator. Because you can see the refrigerator from the entrance to my condo, it was important to the interior designer to make it a statement. And the Northstar turquoise refrigerator is the “wow” component.

What were you looking for in your kitchen redo?

My condo has a kitchen with a very small footprint. I wanted the kitchen to be “loaded” regardless of its size. Because I was going for that industrial look, I wanted very industrial-looking appliances. For the stove in particular, I wanted an electric glass top with more than four burners, warming drawer and front controls. The refrigerator adds that bit of whimsy. To my friends, it is the “the jewel.”



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ing refrigerators and mini dishwashers, are reflected in the personalized, easy flow of their modestly-sized kitchens.

Little by Little

“Kitchens are tiny in D.C.,” says Sandy Jones, account manager at M and M Appliances in Northwest Washington. “There’s no other way around it.”

The company has been working with homeowners for years to place smaller-scale appliances in kitchens throughout the Washington area. However, the market for such high-end appliances has really flourished, offering so many more options for fully loaded kitchens.

There’s no such thing as compromising, says McGarry. Petite kitchens may mean making space-saving choices or use of imagination, but there’s no need to sacrifice quality or style.

“I find it easy to cook in the small kitchen because everything is close at hand,” says Northwest D.C. resident Florence Gallagher. She worked with Grisham to remodel her 1964 condo kitchen, putting in all stainless-steel appliances, including a counter-depth Fisher Paykel refrigerator, with a bottom freezer that has pull-out drawers.

“My new kitchen appears larger than my old one, even though I have more counter space and cabinets and an 18-inch dishwasher,” says Gallagher of her U-shaped space. “My kitchen has a very sleek look to it.”

In a well-designed kitchen, high-end or modest, everything is simply in its place.

“Good design is balance,” says McGarry. “The balance of size, shape movement, color and texture—with some fun thrown in.”

From industrial-look stainless steel to retro, candy-colored appliances, fun has as much importance as design in today’s modern kitchen. And a backdrop that’s easy on the eyes doesn’t hurt.

Now, isn’t that why we tune into “Rachael Ray”?

Q&A

with Zony Mannon

Specialist in the appliance department at Lowe’s Home Improvement in Alexandria:

Have you seen an increase in demand for smaller appliances?

Absolutely. For the last year and a half we’ve been selling a lot more compact-size appliances as opposed to some full-size ones. A lot of the manufacturers are making them so they’re a little bit more compact.

What is the impact on homeowners who are seeking space-saving appliances?

If you’re working with a smaller kitchen, a galley kitchen or something like that, there are a couple options for sizing for refrigeration, and also for cooking products. A lot of people are doing what they call a smaller-size refrigerator which is around 14 to 10 cubic feet. They are Energy Star-rated, so it saves you a lot of energy, and at the same time doesn’t take up the width that a normal refrigerator does, which is about 32 to 36 inches.

What other changes in the kitchen are you noticing?

What people do now is get the microwave cooking combination, which means you have an over-the-range microwave, which also works as a convection oven. So instead of only microwaving, you can actually bake in it.

What are some appliances that homeowners are using to save space in their kitchens?

For a small kitchen you could do a 20- or 24-inch stove—gas or electric. Also, under-the-counter fridges. Some refrigerator models have freezers on top and refrigerators on the bottom. There are also versions that add on a lot more height, and that’s how you get more space. It’s going to be narrower but taller so you can fit more stuff in there. Another space saver: 18-inch dishwashers. Those are both Energy Star-rated and smaller than the traditional dishwasher, which is 24 inches wide. That definitely helps you save space in a small kitchen area, especially for condos around Arlington and Old Town.