

Put the 'kitsch' back in kitchen

Continued from Page 41

"I think we're reaching back to simpler times, when America was kind of on track and things were looking up. ... It's something that hits an emotional chord," says Rosanna Bowles, founder and owner of the Seattle-based Rosanna Inc. tableware line.

Here are some fun and simple ways to put the "kitsch" back into your kitchen.

WALLPAPER AND WALLCOVERINGS

Ditch the staid neutrals in favor of a fun wallpaper, says Gina Shaw, a designer with Pennsylvania-based York Wallcoverings.

The company's new Bistro 750 collection features a savory mix of fanciful fruit, cutlery, kitchen utensils and coffee cups in cheery colors like teal, salmon and lime.

"We really wanted to create wallpapers that would work in today's kitchens, where families gather, eat, drink and socialize — a fun, bistro atmosphere," Shaw says.

Anthony Carrino and John Colaneri, hosts of HGTV's "Kitchen Cousins," introduced a retro feel in one of their recent kitchen makeovers by attaching paneling from Inhabit Living in a basket-weave pattern to the walls.

"After you install the panels, you can caulk the seams, sand them down a bit, put some primer on and add a big pop of color," Carrino says.

APPLIANCES

Also big in kitchens right now are retro appliances that look like they belong in grandma's 1950s kitchen but run like their modern-day cousins.

Carrino and Colaneri brought some quirk to a country kitchen by installing

a retro range and hood set from Colorado-based Big Chill, which offers fridges, stoves and even dishwashers in any color but stainless steel, accented by chrome trim.

"It looks like a classic car. ... It's like having a Bosch or Frigidaire with that kind of dependability but you've got that cool, retro feel to the whole thing," Carrino says.

Kitchenaid and some small manufacturers also now make blenders, mixers and other appliances in funky colors like pistachio and tangerine to add panache to countertops.

COUNTERTOPS

Speaking of counters, don't think you're relegated to granite, solid surface or laminate choices.

Try something fresh and unique like the Motivo embossed collection by California-based CaesarStone, which is primarily advertised as a wall treatment but which Carrino used as a surface for kitchen countertops.

"We saw it and bought it on the spot," he said. "We designed it into the first kitchen we could find. It is absolutely gorgeous."

The collection comes in lace and crocodile patterns, and adds texture to a space by combining matte and glossy finishes in an unusual way, Carrino said.

DISHWARE

Carry the kitschy feel to your cupboards and display shelves with dishes bedecked in whimsical floral or bird patterns, and glassware in Depression-era hobnail or Mid-century Modern lines, says Bowles.

Even a quirky red polka-dotted cookie tray or serving piece, as featured in Bowles' new Flea Market Chic collection for spring, can dress up an otherwise traditional all-white table.

Those looking to save

money can look to family heirlooms, Bowles says. "Shop either your mother's closet or your grandmother's closet and you'll find amazing things," she notes.

ACCENTS

Atlanta-based artist Jordan Sandlin and her husband, Jeff, have embraced the kitchen in their mid-century, split-level home by doing away with its old "buyer-friendly" neutral color scheme in favor of robin's-egg-blue cabinets, red Formica countertops, vintage light fixtures, and plenty of thrift store and estate sale finds.

A collection of screen-printed serving trays dating to the 1950s line the wall above the kitchen cabinets, while a recent find — an original, signed Charlie Harper print of two white eagles set against a light gray background — dresses up a barren wall.

A red-and-white, 1950s formica table, vinyl chairs, old bourbon bottles and vintage plates further separate

their kitchen from today's pack of "granite-covered kitchen monstrosities," the couple says.

Jeff Sandlin said they hoped to transform the room "from a bland space with no identity to one we hoped would be better called a 'kitsch-en.' We feel that our kitchen is a space that defines our home and design style, while declaring our enjoyment and respect for the past."

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Online:

Kitchen Cousins:
<http://www.hgtv.com/kitchen-cousins/show/index.html>

York Wallcoverings:
<http://www.yorkwall.com>

Inhabit Living:
<http://www.inhabitliving.com>

Big Chill:
<http://bigchill.com>

Sandlins' blog:
<http://www.homesweet-splitlevel.com>

CaesarStone:
<http://www.caesarstone.com/>



AP photo
York Wallcoverings offers wallpaper designs of kitchen utensils in white on black.

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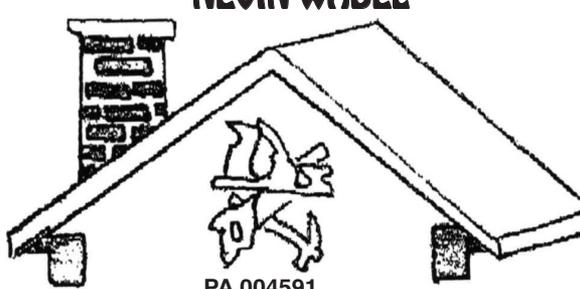
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