

Rumors of our Death



Mark Twain had it right. Newspapers reported that he was sick, perhaps dead. "Rumors of my death," he wrote to a friend, "have been greatly exaggerated." We've heard the same rumors about Shelter. Of course, we understand why: the bottom has fallen right out of the home building industry.

There's no lack of candidates to blame. You can pick from foolish borrowers, short-sighted lenders, or irresponsible brokers on Wall Street. The brokers are my personal favorites, the ones who risked the whole house of (bad credit) cards, knowing that they'd never lose their commissions, no matter what anyone else lost.

So what happened? We all watched as the sub-prime loan market collapsed, taking with it credit confidence and the housing industry. Homes, dreams and jobs have all been

Cooking up the Latest Kitchen Trends

Kitchens have always been the center of a house. It's where everyone congregates at a party, regardless of the host's intentions. It's where the mail, the keys and the family news are dropped on the way in. The kitchen is so important to most people that it is the feature most likely to make or break the purchase of a home.

Not surprisingly, the kitchen is a lightning rod for design and lifestyle trends. In addition to such products as cabinets, appliances, and plumbing fixtures (to name only a few), the layout, function, and look of the kitchen continually evolves to meet modern needs. Here are a few current trends to consider:

Outdoor kitchens. Once you experience a true outdoor kitchen with a full range of function, you'll never go back to a rollout charcoal grill again. Outdoor kitchens have become a legitimate industry. Manufacturers offer improved products that better withstand the weather (such as polymer-based cabinet fronts) and refreshment centers that more aptly accommodate outdoor needs, such as snacks and beverages.

New fronts. Raised-panel cabinet fronts are a mainstay in kitchens, but the natural wood look is waning a bit in favor of paint finishes in deep reds and lighter greens. Designers mix and match painted and natural-wood finishes to add distinctive style and to identify subtle differences in function. For appliances, popular stainless steel finishes have evolved into brushed metallic and graphite-like looks to broaden the options and upgrade style.

Secondary kitchens. Also called butler's pantries or prep kitchens, these smaller spaces allow caterers and party-throwers to keep the mess out of the main kitchen (where, as we said, everyone gathers) while also creating a convenient access to food and refreshments from the dining room. Smaller-scale appliances, including warming drawers, built-in coffee makers, and wine chillers, not to mention specialty storage options, suit the function of these spaces. Morning kitchens, located in or adjacent to the master suite, are also gaining popularity.

Specialization. Once upon a time, there was only one sink in the kitchen. Now, there can be a handful, serving specific functions and equipped with varying styles of faucets. Long trough sinks, those with built-in cooking elements, multi-basin designs with integral cutting boards, small bar basins, and deep, single-basin sinks for large pots and pans dot every corner of the kitchen.

Zoned approach. The advent of secondary spaces has affected the main kitchen. Smaller-capacity appliances and other products have fostered "snack zones" for busy families. Equipped with a microwave oven, dedicated storage for non-perishables, and various undercounter drawers for refrigerated foods, dishwashing, and warming chores, these zones accommodate a wider (and hopefully healthier) mix of quick meals in a self-contained area.

Center of the universe. The open kitchen plan that includes kitchen, casual eating area and family room is now firmly established. The newest expansion of

casualties.

And Shelter? We've been affected along with the rest. Many of our clients and potential clients have put their home-building dreams on hold in order to conserve their assets in uncertain times. They'll be back when they can do so with confidence.

Meanwhile, Shelter will conserve, too, storing up its experience and priceless relationships with the best in the trades and waiting out the tough times. That means you won't see some familiar faces at the office for a while, and some faces you won't see as often. This is an unhappy choice for us, but we have weathered tough times before and know that good times will return.

So we say with Mark Twain: The rumors of our death are **greatly** exaggerated! Our doors are open and will stay open for old friends and new. We are spending any 'spare time' increasing our expertise in green-building so that when our clients are ready, we will be even better prepared to build wonderful high performance homes for them.

And a bit of a break isn't all bad, you know. Come on over. I'll fix you one of my famous lattes and you can check my pulse.

kitchen function is the kitchen island that extends farther into the living space, serving as an area for homework and crafts, dining and catering, and all-round hangout. Equipped with flush-mounted or concealed under counter electrical outlets, overhead lighting, and ample storage, today's island is considered by many as a home's true center.

Successfully,



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Our website has a fresh new look



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