

Kitchens that go with the flow

By KIM COOK
Associated Press

Kitchens tend to be designed as star players on the residential stage. Their role is often aspirational — pro chef’s lair, for example, or the country kitchen from that Italian movie you loved.

But there’s a different story being played out by some kitchen designers today: kitchens that merge seamlessly into the rest of the main living space.

Sometimes that’s because there are space limitations — a smallish apartment, for example, where the kitchen is cheek-to-jowl with every other room.

Or there may be plenty of space, but no walls, so each living zone looks into the next.

Some new kitchens are nearly invisible; others employ decorative and design elements that assimilate them into the look of adjoining spaces. Cabinetry is the same style, color, material and finish as other furniture. The color palette is the same or complementary. Lighting and accessories echo those in the principal rooms. Flooring is consistent throughout. Appliances are integrated. Even the island and countertops reflect materials used in adjoining spaces.

The Dunagan Diverio Design Group in Coral Gables, Fla., recently completed a Miami penthouse project with an open floor plan. The clients loved to cook and needed

lots of space that functioned well.

“But they also wanted the kitchen to have clean lines and be completely integrated into the home’s design,” says firm co-founder Charlotte Dunagan. “We created a kitchen that flowed directly as part of the great room and living space. The concept we aimed for was to conceal as many of the appliances as possible, even going so far as to find a white oven to blend into the white cabinets.”

It was important to have the finishes all work together, says her partner, Tom Diverio.

“The kitchen really becomes part of the space, especially with the neutral oak wood flooring that continues throughout the home,” he says. “We were also careful to select finishes that were warm and inviting, which appear to be more like furniture.”

Pale walls in the open layout allowed for the residents’ art collection to carry through, further integrating the kitchen into the home.

Architect Dan Brunn in Los Angeles says he, too, keeps flooring the same throughout an open-plan home.

“The dining room and living room are typically connected to the kitchen, so we make the kitchen feel more ‘domesticated,’ less like a stainless steel lab,” he says. “One of my favorite things is to specify full custom-front appliances.”



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