

NKBA 2027 Kitchen Trends Report Signals Shifts in Kitchen Design

Designers forecast the return of defined zones, natural wood cabinets, hidden appliances, and more-personalized layouts – while AI takes a back seat

Bethlehem, PA – (October 14, 2026) — The National Kitchen & Bath Association (NKBA), the world's leading trade association for the kitchen and bath industry, representing nearly 55,000 North American kitchen and bath industry professionals, has released its **2027 Kitchen Trends Report**. Drawn from a survey of industry designers, manufacturers, remodelers and architects, the report finds a kitchen in transition on multiple fronts: layouts are becoming more zoned and deliberate, wellness and climate resilience are moving from afterthought to design priority, and technology is being adopted more selectively than the broader market's AI conversations might suggest.

Among the most notable shifts, defined zones, partial walls and operable partitions are now replacing the fully open floor plan, with partially concealed kitchens and semi-enclosed layouts cited as up-and-coming. It's a reversal from NKBA's 2026 report, which identified open layouts as a trend still in its growth phase. Underlying all of this is a kitchen that continues to grow, though less rapidly than last year. About half of designers (52%) now expect kitchen footprints to increase over the next three years, down from 76% in 2026.

While smart technology continues to expand throughout the kitchen, designers are tempering expectations for AI specifically: just 27% agree that ovens with integrated AI will be popular, suggesting adoption is more measured than headline-driven. At the same time, designers are optimizing interior environments for wellness through better light, air and water quality, positioning ventilation as a health feature rather than a code requirement. Designers are also leading climate-resilient discussions with practical solutions, such as leak detection, automatic shut-off valves and backup power.

"For the past several years, we've seen the kitchen expand in size. The 2027 Kitchen Trend Report reveals that this evolution is continuing, with the kitchen extending into more areas of the home," said Bill Darcy, Global President & CEO of NKBA. "While the kitchen has always been the 'heart of the home,' that idea has taken on new meaning. From mudrooms and laundry rooms to back pantries and personalized work zones, the report shows that we've entered a new era of what the kitchen can do for homeowners – solving real problems, adding home value, and elevating the way we live."

The full report is available at [NKBA.org](https://nkba.org) with free access for [NKBA members](#). Key findings include:

The Great Rebalancing of Space

- **Walls Make a Comeback:** Designers are moving away from fully open layouts in favor of defined zones, partial walls, and operable partitions. Intentional zoning is rated "here to stay" by 81% of designers, while semi-enclosed layouts (46%) and partially concealed kitchens (41%) are named up-and-coming features.
- **The Back Kitchen Returns:** Dedicated prep spaces and back kitchens are named as up-and-coming layout features, cited by 47% of designers.
- **Layout Is the New Luxury Upgrade:** Function is driving investment, with layout reconfiguration ranking as the second-highest-ROI kitchen investment (49%), just behind cabinet upgrades (54%).
- **The Hardest-Working Rooms:** Mudrooms and laundry spaces are increasingly integrated into the broader kitchen ecosystem, with 94% of designers agreeing attached mudrooms will be popular over the next three years, and both mudroom (45%) and laundry (43%) spaces are expected to grow.

- **Bigger Footprint, Simpler Feel:** The overall kitchen footprint is growing, with 52% of designers agreeing it will increase over the next three years. Still, the goal isn't more open space for its own sake: 86% agree the layout itself is simplifying, with less clutter and a more spacious feel, as square footage gets reallocated into the defined zones, back kitchens, and enclosed storage described above.

Colors & Materials: Quiet Remains The Favorite

- **Neutrals Hold the Line:** Neutrals remain the top color choice at 96%, with greens (83%) and blues (75%) following, both ticking slightly down from 2026 (86% and 78%, respectively). Meanwhile, warmer hues are making their case: yellow landed at 43%, down slightly from 47% in 2026, while reds, including burgundies and bright reds, held steady at 47%, hinting at a continued appetite for richer, more expressive color.
- **Quartzite and Quartz Top the Countertop Charts:** Designers report that quartzite and quartz are their two favorite countertop materials (78% and 74% respectively) with nearly half of all designers (48%) preferring honed/matte finishes.
- **Concealment Is King:** 85% of designers agree cabinetry is being designed to hide appliances and functional elements, while 64% agree open shelving is on its way out in favor of enclosed storage.
- **Wood, Not Painted, Wins:** 34% of designers expect natural material cabinets (no finish) to be popular. 32% favor light-toned cabinetry and 32% favor medium tones, with white oak the wood of choice for 49% of designers; 54% agree the kitchen island will feature a distinct color from the rest of the cabinetry.

Wellness & Climate Resilience Move to the Forefront

In wellness, ventilation is cited alongside water filtration, touchless faucets, and sound-absorbing materials designed to create calmer kitchen environments. Climate resilience has emerged as a clear priority as well, with 65% of designers agreeing on leak detection systems and automatic shut-off valves, 62% citing backup power solutions, and 53% pointing to ventilation and air filtration systems.

A Kitchen Tailored for Functional Living

Designers agree that dedicated beverage areas are continuing to rise, with 90% naming them a popular feature over the next three years, up from 85% in 2026, alongside mudrooms and attached flex spaces (94%). Pet feeding stations (64%) and eat-in kitchens (63%) round out the top lifestyle features designers expect to grow. The kitchen island is becoming the ultimate custom feature as well: 82% of designers say size and configuration are becoming more tailored to the space, and technology leads all expected areas of island change at 74%, ahead of storage (60%) and functional zones (58%). Pantries are undergoing a similar shift, with 88% of designers agreeing they're evolving from storage into multi-functional extensions of the kitchen, 73% predicting dedicated small-appliance stations will be popular, and 67% expecting walk-in pantries to dominate.

Lighting as Design, Not Just Function

Lighting is emerging as one of the kitchen's most expressive elements. Of those surveyed, 84% of designers agree that kitchens will be incorporating multiple layers of lighting to create a more dynamic environment, and 78% agree lighting is increasingly used as a key design feature rather than a purely functional necessity. Connectivity is following suit, with 50% of designers expecting lighting controls to be mobile-device connected in the years ahead.

Designers point to specific fixtures leading that shift over the next three years:

- **Under-Cabinet Steals the Spotlight:** 87% of designers expect under-cabinet lights to be popular, followed closely by interior-cabinet lighting at 76%.
- **Function First, Then Flair:** Recessed lights (57%) and floor/path lighting for nighttime (52%) round out the practical end of the list, while sconces and wall lights (48%) and pendant lights (46%) lead the more decorative fixtures.

- **Niche Fixtures Still on the Rise:** Art lights for picture and display lighting (30%), soffit lighting (28%) and chandeliers (23%) show smaller but notable interest, while hydroponic lights for herbs and plants (18%) point to lighting's growing role in supporting kitchen greenery.

A Measured Approach to AI and Technology In-Demand

AI is entering the kitchen, but cautiously: just 27% of designers expect ovens with food-recognition AI, and 24% expect AI that learns and adjusts to cooking preferences, to be desired in 2027. Air fryers are outpacing convection ovens in anticipated demand, 57% to 46%, and the kitchen continues to move into homeowners' phones, with mobile alerts for power failure or gas leaks (57%), app-controlled appliances (40%), and WiFi-connected refrigerators (37%) and dishwashers (36%) all gaining traction.

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NKBA Survey Methodology

This survey was conducted online among 830 respondents from the NKBA community in the U.S. and Canada, targeting occupations including designers (which make up 62% of responses), dealers/showroom salespeople, dealer specialists, manufacturers, kitchen and bath remodelers/contractors, and architects. Fabricators, home center professionals, honorary members, and installers were excluded from the field. Respondents must have designed, specified, or sold products for at least one kitchen project within the past 12 months. All ages qualified and gender was allowed to fall naturally. Respondents were 90% U.S.-based and 8% Canada-based, and 67% were NKBA members compared with 33% non-members. Results include kitchen completes (n=537) and kitchen partial data (n=293).

About the National Kitchen & Bath Association (NKBA) and the Kitchen & Bath Industry Show (KBIS)

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