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SPECIAL FEATURE **NEW HOMES & CONDOS**

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Trends in kitchen design for new homes, condos

MEGAN MARTIN
SPECIAL TO THE GAZETTE

For many people, kitchens represent far more than just a place to cook and store food. The kitchen is often referred to as the heart of a home. It's where people gather together, share a meal, tell stories, get creative, and even discover passions and talents.

All this considered, it's no surprise that kitchens are a priority when designing new homes or renovating existing properties. *The Gazette* sat down with Walter Assi, owner of Renovco, a Dorval based company specializing in design and renovation, to learn what's new in kitchen design and decor.

"The kitchen is a focal point of the home, so much so that houses are often designed around kitchens," Assi said, noting that, in terms of the room's orientation, the biggest trend today is an open-concept kitchen.

"The fluidity created by an open concept is just beautiful; one room opens into another and you end up with this uniform, welcoming effect."

Kitchens may be the centre of a home, but islands are definitely the centre of the kitchen.

"Islands are a must; they're so in demand," Assi said. "We always try to find a way to incorporate one, even if it's a smaller kitchen."

The popular overall look for kitchens these days is modern and sleek. When it comes to storage, floor-to-ceiling cupboards are the way to go.

"They provide a lot of storage area," Assi said. "And because there's no space between the top of the unit and the ceiling, no dust collects so it's more practical."

Consumers are fortunate to have a much wider variety of choices in terms of material and cupboard design than ever before.

"We used to only have wood, melamine and thermoplastic, but now the newer materials on the market include polyester, acrylic, and a wood composite called MDF — all available in many different colours and textures," Assi said. "So designers and homeowners can get more creative and selective, regardless of their budget, because there's a large middle spectrum now."

But it's not all about aesthetics, he said. "Functionality is very important now. People want things like soft-closing drawers and touch-to-open doors."

Another important element of kitchen design is countertops, which tend to truly stand out as one of the most striking and artistic kitchen components. The majority of people are opting for natural stone countertops.

"They make up about 90 per cent of our installations," Assi said. "Granite is popular, but quartz is increasingly in demand because it's similar to the look of marble."

While it is beautiful, marble itself isn't recommended for kitchen countertops because of its porous nature.

"Quartz is allowing people to achieve the same look, but it's a much more resistant material. It's also available in many solid colours for a more modern look —



PHOTOS COURTESY OF RENOVCO

A popular look for kitchens today is sleek and modern, like the display above, in Renovco's Dorval showroom. Quartz countertops are increasingly in demand because their look is similar to marble, but quartz is more practical because it is not as porous as marble. Faucets, meanwhile, are becoming more complex — and include industrial-style designs.

and marble motifs, too."

Natural stone granite is a popular choice for backsplashes, although porcelain is being used as well. Glass mosaics are often incorporated into backsplashes to create a striking effect.

These days, consumers are also making more esthetically motivated decisions when it comes to sinks.

"Of course people want prac-

tical, but the options available are way beyond the simple undermount stainless-steel sinks of the past," Assi said. "We're doing a lot of cast-iron sinks now; they're really beautiful. Old enamel sinks are back in style, too."

Faucets are becoming more complex, both in look and technology.

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