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PERSONALIZED CUSTOM KITCHENS

Choices... Choices... Choices

TEXT Barbara Karth, Chevy Chase, MD



ABOVE: Soft maple cabinets are paired with countertops and backsplash of verde lavares marble. On one end, the cabinetry takes a cue from a living room curio cabinet. Glass doors with decorative mullions lend an aura of dining room furnishings.

It is no longer a matter of taking out the old and putting in the new; fewer and fewer homeowners are satisfied with cookie cutter kitchen remodeling. "Doing the kitchen is no longer like the old days. Every kitchen is different with its own unique look," says Sonny Nazemian, president of Michael Nash Custom Kitchens & Homes in suburban Virginia. He finds customers coming to him to help with ideas and problem-solving. They know what they want, but sorting through the options and making it all work is another matter. It takes expert help. And each homeowner wants a special, custom look.

"The secret of getting a better kitchen is the space planning," Mr. Nazemian says. This is true whether the new kitchen is configured within the same space or incorporates a new addition. "Every kitchen has its own potential problem, and we turn the problems into opportunities."

"Today, the kitchen is more decorative." He finds more people wanting custom columns and fluted

pilasters incorporated into their design. For the look of furniture in the kitchen, cabinets have varying heights, toe kicks are refined and mouldings are added: crown, rope and dentil detailing have found their way into the kitchen. "Cabinets are becoming more and more personalized."

And there are so many choices. "For traditional styling combined with sturdiness we use oak; it gives versatility. If customers want the elegant look, we use cherry. Maple has a calm feeling; it is less grainy. The hickory has a rugged charm," says Mr. Nazemian. For "the warmth and charm of a country kitchen," he suggests the simple lines of the Shaker look. Or, "a more sophisticated European look with different ogees for the doors." Many people request wine racks or plate racks and convenient extras inside the cabinets, including roll-out drawers and recycling centers. Often, cabinets are rounded at the end for a softer look.

"These days we have a lot of mix-and-match finishes and a lot of custom-glazed finishes. We can

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