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# Just Peachy

Trend-setting products abounded at K/BIS 2009 in Atlanta

Despite current economic conditions, a number of innovative products were showcased at the 2009 Kitchen/Bath Industry Show (K/BIS) held in Atlanta's Georgia World Congress Center from May 1 to 3. Some products met consumer demand for eco-consciousness or accessibility, while others offered wallet-friendly price points or boasted the latest style trends.

## EXTENSIONS AND ECONOMICS

In addition to introducing new products and collections, several manufacturers expanded existing lines with more affordable options, water-efficient and/or energy-conservation features, as well as new finishes, colors and sizes. Brizo, for example, launched a 1.5-gpm version of its Tresa faucet, and ShowHouse by Moen restyled its Woodmere fitting collection. As Patricia Gaylor, of Patricia Gaylor Interior Design in Little Falls, NJ, noted, "There was a lot of tweaking of existing products," a trend which Troy Adams, CKD, of Troy Adams Design in West Hollywood, CA, also noticed. One reason? Pure economics. Adams said, "It's more costly for manufacturers to introduce new product lines."

Of course, the market slump and an increase in gas prices this summer are also affecting consumer buying patterns. Most homeowners are moving away from "the bells and whistles," said Chris Acker, a general contractor from Montrose, PA. Instead, they are focused on finding more bang for their buck. And manufacturers are responding. Appliance makers, especially, came up with a middle ground between extremely high-priced wares and standard items that featured style and functionality at reasonable prices. Sears, for example, rolled out aggressive price promotions for its new Kenmore lines of ranges and induction cooktops, as well as washers, which begin at \$1,599.99. LG also offered lower MSRPs for its washers and dryers in wild cherry red, with units starting at \$999 each.

## A BRIGHTER TOMORROW

As consumers become more environmentally conscious, the demand for stylish green products will continue to grow, as was evident at the show. "The most talked about products had a sustainable



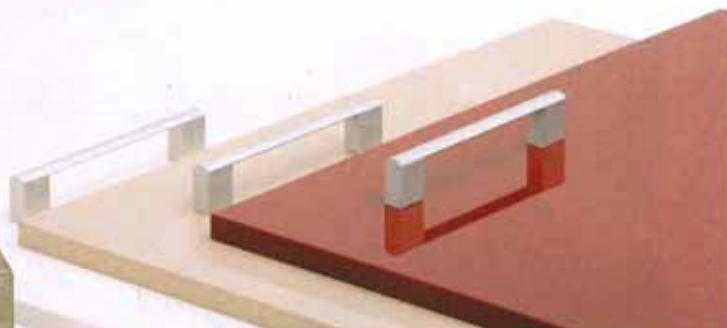
*Cosentino launched ECO by Cosentino (above), a new line of countertop and surfacing materials composed of 75 percent post-industrial and post-consumer recycled raw material. It is offered in several colors, such as white diamond (shown). Expanding its Boutique Collection with solid-surface tubs and sinks, MTI Whirlpools turned to designer Matthew Quinn. The Eryx sink (left) demonstrates a sloping, asymmetrical design.*



or energy-efficient message," said Gaylor. For example, Cosentino, which manufactures Silestone, a quartz countertop, came out with ECO, a new line that uses 75 percent recycled material. "This trend is definitely being influenced by public demand for more sustainable products, and demand could lead to lower pricing if the product is a success," Gaylor added. "If it was a new appliance introduction, not only did it have to look beautiful, but it also had to function efficiently." One way, said Gaylor, is to utilize "smart technology" to limit the amount of water and/or electricity needed. Whirlpool, for instance, introduced the Resource Saver refrigerator, which uses 6th Sense technology to automatically adjust

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Element Designs' High Gloss Solid Surface Parapan Doors (right), feature 17 bold colors. Fu-Tung Cheng's kitchen for Jenn-Air (bottom right) combines natural and man-made materials. Brizo updated the Tresa Collection (below), which now flows at 1.5 gpm. The Kenmore Elite HE5T Steam Washer (center) is currently offered at \$1,599.99 vs. \$1,799.99.



cooling and exceed Energy Star efficiency ratings by 10 percent.

Technology is also playing a role in new products that target the aging baby boomer generation, as well as the demand for and increasing interest in accessible living environments. Remote-control-activated lowering systems, such as the Compagnucci from Rev-A-Shelf, offer a convenient reach, noted Mark White, CKD, of Annapolis, MD-based Kitchen Encounters. Additionally, Armstrong Cabinets showed a Universally Designed vignette complete with accessible upper cabinets, adjustable shelving, pullout drawers and varying counter heights. Other options on the show floor included the latest in walk-in bathtubs by Safety Tubs and decorative grab bars from companies like Kohler.

#### MOVEMENT IN THE HOME

Because homeowners continue to use their kitchens as living spaces, the walls between "the heart of the home" and the adjacent dining and living room spaces are being eliminated, a trend that Adams observed. Furniture-style pieces and concealed appliances in the kitchen are on the rise to accommodate the proliferation of open-space layouts. "Living and dining rooms are becoming more unused," he said. "The kitchen is now opening up to a combined living and family room for enhanced entertainment opportunities."

Along with this enhanced openness comes a new willingness to fuse different materials and finishes, as seen in Fu-Tung Cheng's kitchen design for the Jenn-Air booth. "We are seeing several mediums being

used in a kitchen setting: aluminum being paired with wood; combining different wood species; and using various countertop materials in one setting," said Adams. Offering a fitting backdrop, contemporary-style cabinets are increasingly taking on more neutral tones. But color also made a splash at this year's show, with hues such as purple, orange and green being the most prominent, noted Gaylor.

Also a standout at K/BIS was the abundance of modern styles and shapes. Although innovative forms were shown primarily in freestanding tubs by companies such as MTI Whirlpools and MAAX, White noted, a variety of exhibitors showcased cabinets, faucets and fixtures with an unmistakable minimalist look. And while many new products and collections met different expectations, at least one theme was prevalent throughout. "I found that the trend this year for many products was simplicity and gracefulness," added Gaylor. "Everything seemed to be designed more fluidly and with less ornamentation. The trend toward 'less is more' has never been more apparent." ■

—Matthew Marin

Check out the editors' product picks at [www.kbbonline.com/KBIS](http://www.kbbonline.com/KBIS)



### Pattern Making

Inspired by images found in nature, the Nora Series from **Nora Lighting** features textured and patterned art glass pendants that can be canopy-, rail- or track-mounted. The fixtures are available in compact fluorescent, low-voltage, line-voltage and incandescent versions. The series also includes matching wall sconces. **Circle No. 218**



### In Reverse

**Kenmore Elite's** Reversible Door Microhood Combination features a dual-swing door that can be opened from the left or right side. This model includes a 600-cfm ventilation system, halogen cooktop lighting, a gliding tray as opposed to a conventional turntable and sensors that automatically determine heating time. **Circle No. 217**



### Boutique Design

**MTI Whirlpools** has expanded its Boutique Collection with solid-surface tubs and sinks designed by Matthew Quinn. The highlight of the collection is the Intarcia tub (shown), which can be adorned with any inlay of choice, such as metal, glass, wood or stone. Available in white, biscuit, raven or osprey, the tub measures 67 in. x 40 in. x 24<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in. **Circle No. 219**



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