



## PLANNING A KITCHEN. WHAT TO EXPECT.

**If you are planning a new kitchen during 2015/16 you will need to look at the trends seen at the Eurocucina 2014. South Africa usually follows a year or so behind the trends coming out of Europe meaning that by the time you are ready for your kitchen the trends seen at the 2014 Eurocucina faire in Milan will be the talk of the town. By knowing the latest European trends you will ensure your new kitchen is elegant and on-trend.**

Eurocucina 2014 showcased a move away from the ultra-modern kitchen. Designs had a new maturity and sensibility aimed at fulfilling the practical needs of the consumer. Linea design was very prominent. This way of designing, where the bulk of the cabinetry is built up against one wall often with a kitchen island parallel to the main cabinets, has developed to accommodate open plan living. It is perfect for both small and large spaces. The use of linear design creates clean lines and a sense of simplicity that works for both a modern or traditional aesthetics.



High gloss surfaces are very popular at the moment. The move away from this was perhaps one of the most drastic shifts seen at the show. The kitchens displayed focused on the juxtaposition of a variety of textures with designers moving away from the reflective, polished look of a high gloss kitchen to a more sophisticated mix of textures. Matte finishes dominated the show with edited use of reflective

surfaces. Steel, glass, laminates, natural stone and quartz surfaces, porcelain and timber were displayed as the preferred materials with various effects applied to each element. The combining of textures helped to create 'living' spaces, aimed at encouraging interaction and practicality in the kitchen.

By mixing materials the new designs created a dynamic layering of textures. Combinations of concrete, metals, glass, wood, laminates, quartz and marble, with a clear focus on natural-looking products were showcased. Timber veneers, stone finishes, ceramic surfaces and metallic patterning were prominent. The incorporation of natural elements into the design is in line with the rising awareness of sustainability. This was echoed by the inclusion of green spaces in the kitchen with potted herb and flower 'gardens'.

Eurocucina exhibitors ramped up their inclusion of innovative technologies. The focus on space saving saw mini-bars emerging automatically from kitchen counter-tops, automated cupboard doors hiding and revealing cabinet contents, and kitchen counter-tops moving horizontally and vertically to cater for real-time solutions to easy dining and hiding away the less attractive kitchen elements. This applied to appliances as well with extractor fans that emergence from counter-tops at the press of a button.

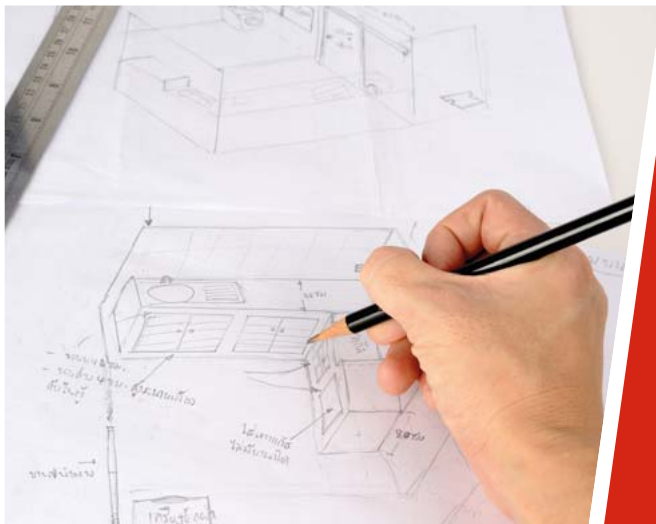
One thing that has not changed is the inclusion of a dining table in the kitchen, either freestanding or as part of the kitchen counter-top. Many designs incorporated a conjoined dining space attached to the main kitchen island, allowing the kitchen to become the firm hub of hospitality in the home. With South Africans being notorious for their love of family, friends and good food, this trend is very suited to our lifestyle. The continuation of this design trend shows that open plan living and the kitchen as a central living area is here to stay. Some designs went even further with the interlinking of the kitchen and living space through the addition of couches and televisions to the kitchen area.

Lighting in the kitchen played a vital design roll. The popular lighting trend was low-hanging lights suspended over the island space, however, more and more designers opted for floor-level lighting on the kickboards and continued to use LED strips beneath high level cabinets and at on the inner corners of open shelving. A new trend that stood out was LED lighting appearing within drawers, switching on automatically when the drawer was opened.

Cabinets were mostly free of traditional handles and showcased the popular push-touch technology and finger grip 'handles'. Although we have seen this trend already in South Africa we are going to see the trend grow in popularity. Combined with linear design, handleless cabinets add to the clean and simple lines. A lack of handles allowed focus to fall squarely on the cabinet cladding material and the layout of the kitchen.

The design trend with counter-tops was to keep them exceptionally slim, adding to a clean, sophisticated look. Some designers opted for a reverse bevel, cutting away the original surface thickness to create the illusion of a super-thin top.

Improved technologies in cabinet construction showed thinner cabinet doors, which beautifully matched the thinner surfaces. Some designers created visual interest by combining chunkier surface materials with the thin, porcelain, timber, marble or engineered stone tops.



The new trends showed the disappearance of the glossy bright colours. These were replaced with mostly dark, monochromatic tones. Dark and light timber tones were popular giving the kitchens a more masculine overtone. In some cases one or two primary colours were used as interest points. The best designs incorporated a combination of textures in the same tones.

There is much to look forward to as these trends filter down to South Africa. Be inspired by these design trends but ensure when you are ready that you opt to deal with a professional company that can afford you the protection and professionalism you deserve. If you are aware of the trends in the industry and put in place the parameters to protect both yourself and your investment the journey to having your dream kitchen part of your home should be an easy and relatively stress-free one.

***Thanks to Caesarstone for their help with this article.***

