

Building Conversations

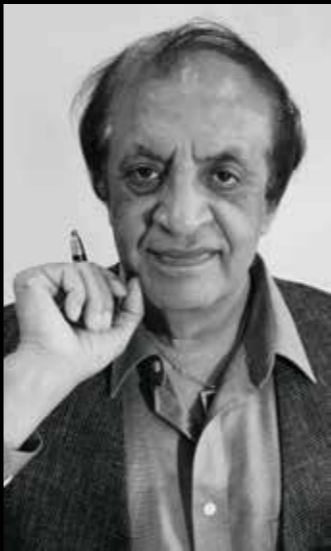
Views and insights from architects, interior designers and newsmakers that are shaping the design world



TRENDS Perspective



Interview



Guest Column

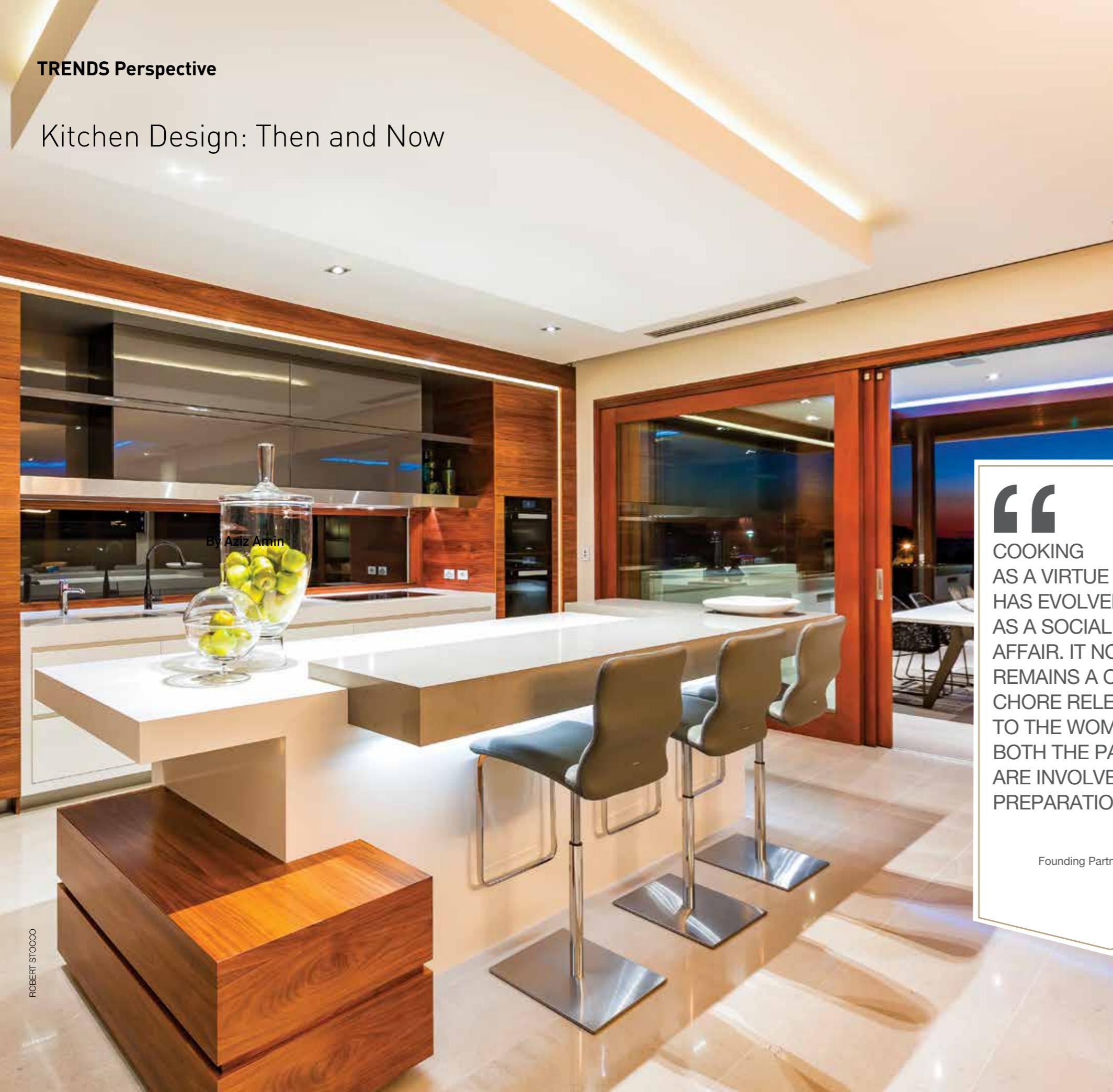


My View



In the Spotlight

Kitchen Design: Then and Now



By Aziz Amin

ROBERT STOCO

Indian consumers' evolving mindsets have sparked massive advancements in the kitchen industry. From an isolated space tucked in a corner, to taking centrestage in the living area of a home, the Indian kitchen has a story to tell...

By Aziz Amin

The kitchen industry in India has probably witnessed more changes than any other segment in the interiors gamut. To understand the evolution of kitchens, we first need to understand the evolution of cooking habits in the country. Two factors have distinctively influenced the design of our kitchens. One is involvement of the family in the space (as opposed to women alone). In a modern nuclear family, where both the partners are working professionals, it is not surprising to see the husband spending time in the kitchen and preparing a meal for the family. Second is the number of cuisines being prepared in an Indian kitchen today, which requires additional equipment.



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— Manish Gulati,
Founding Partner/ Principal Architect,
M:OFA Studios

One of the primary reasons for the change in kitchen designs is a major cultural shift influenced by the West. The space, which once used to be tucked in the back, divorced from all social areas, now occupies the centre space, open and uninterrupted, amidst people and activities. Kitchens are now considered an extension of the living space and choosing the right one for a home has become a family affair. Jürgen Wolf, Managing Director, Häfele India, says, “Modern home owners have increasingly started viewing kitchens as a place for cultivating new socialising habits and pay as much attention to their design as the rest of the home, particularly in terms of balancing functionality with aesthetics. The recent growth in social dining and home restaurants testifies people's desire to create and share fun experiences. The kitchen becomes a theatre in which the acts of food preparation, cooking and sharing create private entertainment for families and friends.” Male celebrity chefs and cooking shows have further altered the perception of cooking in Indian mindsets.

Lack of time at hand for working professionals, especially in metro cities, has influenced kitchen designs that keep conversations flowing while a meal is being prepared. “With people getting busy in their professional lives and having little time to cook, kitchens are increasingly becoming a part of their living rooms. This way people can cook and be connected to the living areas simultaneously,” says Manish Gulati, Founding Partner/Principal Architect, M:OFA Studios.



THE LOOK

Modular kitchens sold in India have shed the mundane image and are now turning into design marvels. As the space is gradually receiving the attention it has been longing for, it's aesthetic value and style quotient has increased significantly. Designs are clean, straight-line and contemporary, in sync with the rest of the interior gamut. In the last decade, the focus has gradually moved to including an aspirational lifestyle element into kitchens. With an overwhelming influence from the far West and Europe, island and open kitchens have gained popularity. As a result, over the last 10 years, the growth drivers for the kitchen market have gradually transited from sheer utility and durability to style and elegance.

Evolution happens when out-of-the-box client demands can be addressed with the help of design and technology.



“CLIENTS WANT EQUIPMENT SUCH AS PLATE WARMERS, INTEGRATED COFFEE MAKERS, REFRIGERATORS, TEPPANYAKI COOKING PLATES, OTHER THAN DEEP FRYERS, TELEVISIONS, MUSIC SYSTEMS, MOOD LIGHTING AND MUCH MORE, WHICH HAVE BECOME A PART OF MOST KITCHENS TODAY. DESIGN NEEDS TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THESE FACTORS, WHICH THE NEW-AGE CLIENTS ARE KEEN ON.”

— Mujib Ahmed, Partner,
Collaborative Architecture



TRENDS

An observation of the latest kitchens reveals that handles and knobs have disappeared. Instead, cabinets and drawers use soft touch open and shut systems or flushed handles. Seamless cabinet fronts add to the aesthetics of the design. The use of hinged doors and overhead cabinets is gradually making way for lift-systems that move upward and away from the line of work. Induction countertops are a promising alternative to traditional gas burners but haven't witnessed much traction due to lack of awareness.



“INDUCTION COOKING, WHICH RELIES ON AN ELECTROMAGNET TO HEAT IRON OR STEEL COOKWARE, REMAINS LARGELY UNKNOWN TO MOST HOMES IN INDIA.

Price is not the obstacle keeping it under the wraps, but the lack of basic information about induction cooking itself. It is faster, safer, and cleaner. It also results in less wastage of heat and turns out to be economical as compared to conventional gas. On the design front, induction cook tops are sleeker than conventional burners and add to the overall aesthetic of the kitchen.”

— Reza Kabul, Director,
ARK Reza Kabul Architects

Being health conscious has sparked a trend in the kitchen industry and started to reflect in consumer preferences. Kanupriya Mal, Director, Kanu Kitchen Kulture (Häcker), says, “To keep the nutrition value of the food intact, people are moving away from microwaves and investing in steam ovens and warmer drawers. Many kitchens are now split between a cooking space and a utility space; we see people shifting the dishwashing area to a separate space in the kitchen or as a combination with the laundry section. Also, inclusion of specialist appliances like wine coolers and coffee machines show a rising wine and coffee culture in India.”



“KITCHENS WITH MATT GREY AND RUSTIC TONES, NATURAL WOOD FINISHES AND EARTHY COLOURS ARE IN FASHION. ALSO, NATURAL WOOD FINISHES, NATURAL STONE FINISHES, POLISHED STONE FINISHES, METAL SURFACES, PORCELAIN SURFACES ARE PREDOMINANTLY IN TREND.

Using combinations of these surfaces and finishes can also attribute a different look to the kitchen. For example, kitchens having stone and wood or metal and stone combinations.”

— Jürgen Wolf, Managing Director, Häfele India





INTERNATIONAL KITCHENS

Indian cooking habits vary greatly from that of the European markets and hence kitchen brands from Europe must alter their offerings to suit the Indian climatic conditions and usage. The product has to be more rugged to suit the Indian audience, as it is going to be used by the house help who may not handle it with the same care. Also, there are cultural differences within the vast country. For example, the type of kitchen required for a Tamil family will vary greatly from a Sikh family, making it even more challenging for the international players. Manish Gulati says, "International kitchen manufacturers indeed are producing designs with better chimneys and filtration systems, but their discord with our traditional cooking needs makes its all the more irrelevant when iterated in Indian kitchens. The main issue arises when designers try to fit in their standardised modules without understanding the sequence of its usage in the Indian context."



WE RARELY USE BRANDED KITCHENS. WE DESIGN THEM SPECIFIC TO THE CLIENT AND THE SPACE. BESPOKE KITCHENS WORK BETTER AND CAN BE MADE WITH PRECISION AS PER THE REQUIREMENT, INSTEAD OF STANDARD AVAILABLE MASS-PRODUCED MODELS.

However, we do incorporate all the branded, sophisticated kitchen hardware and equipment in the kitchens that we design."

— Lalita Tharani, Partner,
Collaborative Architecture



MONEY MATTERS

While the brand of the kitchen does alter its price bracket, there are several technical factors that influence its cost. Reza Kabul, Director, ARK Reza Kabul Architects, says, "Starting with the build of the carcass, one constructed from particle board will cost lesser than that made of solid wood, however its longevity shall be equally less. A cabinet-heavy kitchen will cost more as compared to basic shelving while the choice of hardware fittings will affect the cost and the functioning of the kitchen as well." If the kitchen is mainly to be used by the house help, the budget allocated is usually bare essentials.

FUTURE

As technology gives wings to our imagination, intelligent kitchens with exciting features will soon be a reality. We will see complete integration of appliances and utensils, that interact with each other, understand processes and simplify cooking. A smart kitchen will have the ability to keep a track of the groceries and place orders online. It may very well act as a dietician and suggest food items that cater to the family's nutritional needs. It might even incorporate a mini self-contained garden to grow one's own organic food.

Kitchens today have multiple users, right from the domestic help, to the elders in the family. It can be called efficient only if it is user-friendly for everyone. "The current technology might not be acceptable to all users, but this will eventually change with the next generation of users. The future kitchens shall not only be high-tech but also intelligent," concludes Reza Kabul.



MOVING KITCHENS WILL BE THE TREND OF THE FUTURE, WE WILL SEE MOVING WORKTOPS ON COUNTERS OR MOVABLE ACCESSORIES FROM BASE TO WALL UNITS. TOUCH SENSOR DRAWERS AND FRONTS WILL GAIN MORE POPULARITY AS WELL."

— Kanupriya Mal, Director,
Kanu Kitchen Kulture (Häcker)



Celebrity chef **Vicky Ratnani** tells us about his kitchen preferences

"My kind of kitchen would have a lot of pastel shades, green, pink, off white, pale blue... with matt-finished, steel-top counters that are easy to clean and have no chance of leaks, cracks or cross contamination. The space should include bright coloured, multifunctional food preparation devices that save space, and concealed charging panels / power sockets to rig up appliances. A small built-in flat screen monitor to watch recipes, food shows or any kind of entertainment would be nice. Plenty of low voltage lighting with some mood lighting options and well-enclosed LED-lit cabinets to store spices, ingredients and other equipment. Powerful hoods that suck up all the smoke would be essential.

A cook top with two burners, char grill, flattop, sunk in air fryer and steamer would be magical while a stone-bottomed oven cum smoker will help create culinary delights easily. Food processors and choppers well placed in cabinets; optimum use of the walls and corners to keep books, gadgets and memorabilia will enhance the overall look and make it a place to create magic. Functionality is key for my kitchen."