

Cook up some color for a kitchen that pops



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Going green

(Alessandro Pademi, Snaidero)

Use a color, like this cedar green in high gloss lacquer from Snaidero to add punch to white cabinetry.

By **Elaine Markoutsas**

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Some like it hot, but when it comes to kitchen design, most of us don't dare to boldly go where no one has gone before. A little edgy with backsplashes, maybe. A lime spatula or even a KitchenAid mixer in raspberry, why not? But an aqua fridge? Or a radiant orchid range? Seriously?

Seriously. This is not for the design timid. This is about the anti-white kitchen, that classic that remains most picked, in spite of what design editors may want.

White is not at all what Pasadena, Calif., homeowners Karen and Brian Frid-Madden wanted. They envisioned an almost Alice in Wonderland-like gathering place for their two small daughters. They are also huge fans of the work of Mexican architect Luis Barragan (known for expansive planes of color even on the facades of buildings), so color fit right in.

"Barragan used color to augment his mastery of space and light within his designs," says Elina Katsioulas-Beall of

DeWitt Designer Kitchens, who worked with the Frid-Maddens. "This, coupled with the theme of bringing the outdoors in by using the cabinetry to evoke fuchsia flower beds, gave us a unique starting point."

For the design, Katsioulas-Beall teamed a neon palette with iridescent tiles, silver painted backsplash and stainless steel, which she says absorb the vibrant hues "like tinted chameleons as the play of light passes over them."

Some may think it a cacophony of color. Others may be more comfortable with monochromatic splashes of bold hues. New York-based Miles Redd has a few high-gloss apple green kitchen cabinets in his design repertoire, making for haute drama in tight spaces.

In the past year, though, a move out of safe neutrals was not limited to cabinets, custom or not. Faucets, sinks, refrigerators and even ranges were introduced in astonishingly unexpected hues. Last year's Pantone color of the year, Radiant Orchid, was repped in ovens by Dacor and a range by BlueStar. Now that's some commitment. But no worries if you're not jazzed by the purple family; BlueStar offers more than 750 color and finish selections.

Chicago designer John Wiltgen has never delved into brights in the more permanent parts of the kitchen. Instead he's paved backsplashes with expressive geometric patterns and popped in bright accessories. In his own home, he did wrap an entire kitchen wall in embossed snakeskin-like leather; still, it's a muted gray.

"We're doing two white kitchens right now," Wiltgen says. "One is for a transplanted San Francisco couple who were remodeling for two years and then got transferred here. They hope to stay put, but they don't want the design to affect resale value."

For those artsy, eclectic folk who may not give a flip about resale values, there's plenty of exuberant color for the kitchen to make you feel like a kid in a candy store (or a Jonathan Adler shop).

Go for an eye-popping faucet. Hastings Tile & Il Bagno does it right with its simple, clean-lined Vola single lever, deck-mounted faucet, available in 15 hues.

Sink your teeth into luscious color for the main or island sink. Pyrolave, an enameled lava stone available as countertop material or sinks, comes in 16 glossy and 16 matte shades, as well as custom colors to match existing interiors.

Keep it cool in a colorful fridge. The Italian company Smeg shows off a little retro '50s styling with soft, rounded edges and a range of happy hues.

Heat it up with a colorful oven or range. Dacor wall ovens are available in 10 standard colors including cordon bleu, citron, crimson and tangerine plus virtually any color imaginable with its ColorMatch system — you provide a swatch. Italian manufacturer Bertozzoni spices up color with tangy orange, lemon yellow or tomato red — in Ferrari finishes.

Make a case for color. From matte to glossy, paneled to modern cabinets, there are Snaidero's glossy brights, as in canary yellow or fiery red, and the latest from manufacturer Plain & Fancy, in a juicy range from apricot to tangerine, with paneled door fronts that wake up tradition. Or paint your own to give them a little pop. Try color as a feature wall to add zest to white or anchor island cabinets with a spicy accent.

Be counter intuitive. Silestone, a natural quartz product by Spanish-based Cosentino, dishes up cool hues from magenta to coral, yellows to apple green and cobalt.

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