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# Keeping Pace in a Revved-up Kitchen

By Michele A. Zommer

Most Americans would love a Porsche or a Ferrari in the driveway. Now German and Italian designers aim to put these prestigious brands in our kitchens.

Designers of these renowned sports cars have partnered with two respected European manufacturers of modern kitchens: Porsche with 100-year-old Poggenpohl in Germany and Ferrari with 60-year-old Snaidero in Italy. Competing alongside several dozen other importers and a handful of American firms, modern design is gaining ground in the U.S. kitchen market.

In our label conscious culture, will new “fast lane” kitchens created by Europe’s fine designers get Americans to give up the traditional kitchen look?

## RATING THE RIDE

Chances are if you love luxury sports cars, then a high performance kitchen won’t be out of place in your home. “It’s design you enjoy looking at, clean, neat and refreshing, with no distractions,” notes Richard Kregloski, who has carried Poggenpohl in his Paramus showroom for 10 years.

Lovers of modern design criticize traditional kitchen style for “gingerbread sameness” — lots of wood with add-ons to save it from becoming bland.

Modern kitchens capitalize on geometric lines, form and light to set the look apart. Some experts call it “modern with emotion.” The basic construction features “frameless” cabinetry in either wall-mounted fabrications or pieces that look like stylized furniture. Wood is available but so are high-pressure laminates, exotic veneers, aluminum, stainless and even colored glass.

The overall look is evolved classic modernist design from the mid-20th century: angular geometry; uniform color in bold, neutral or tone-on-tone interpretations; highly polished surfaces; ambient lighting for accent, and striking accessories, used sparingly.

Ted Chappell, president of Poggenpohl’s U.S. division in Fairfield, says modern design offers clear advantages: “Technology provides a way to make the most of every square inch.”

His company will attempt to dazzle the market in 2008 with

its Porsche-designed “Kitchen for Men,” with a machismo edge it hopes will engage more male consumers. Porsche combines metals with black-lacquered, satinized and high gloss surfaces, open texture woods and glass to capture the exclusive Porsche look.

A high-tech, multimedia LCD audio/video module encased in glass adds to the room’s stunning good looks and keeps sensitive electronics safe from grease or moisture. Also on tap: specialized appliances with sleek sensor keys instead of buttons, which measure up in both function and style to preserve Porsche’s reputation for design purity, harmony and wholeness.

Meanwhile, Snaidero continues its relationship with Ferrari stylist Paolo Pininfarina, who feature Acropolis, Ola and Venus models in their portfolio. Earlier this year, Acropolis was selected for HGTV’s “Ten Most Amazing Kitchens.” Kitchen designer Lorena Polon, who manages Snaidero’s Morristown location, sees Acropolis as “the quintessential expression of ultra-contemporary design.” In its unique concentric layout, the cook can interact with others at all times, while optimizing cooking efficiency — every task within arm’s reach. The engineering is equally enlightened: the “sandwiched” aluminum frame is fully recyclable.

Sports car kitchens take modernism to the limit, but what can a middle-of-the-road modern kitchen do for the American home today? All of the importers offer more moderately priced and modestly styled alternatives. Here are several ways European design can enhance kitchens.

## GETTING A HANDLE ON HIGH STYLE

Traditional kitchens rely on handle and hinge hardware to make a design statement — and because they are typically necessary to open the doors and drawers. The hardware is available

in thousands of styles, sizes, finishes and materials to fit in with every conceivable decor.

The defining feature in the best Euro-kitchens is the absence of hardware — precision-engineered doors and drawers that don’t need handles to operate. Just a light tap activates a mechanism and the drawers open and withdraw on their own power. This feature



Pedini kitchen, courtesy of Küche+Cucina

Opposite page: Acropolis kitchen by Snaidero