



5 hot kitchen trends to try

Go all out with a new look or use our cheap and easy DIY tricks

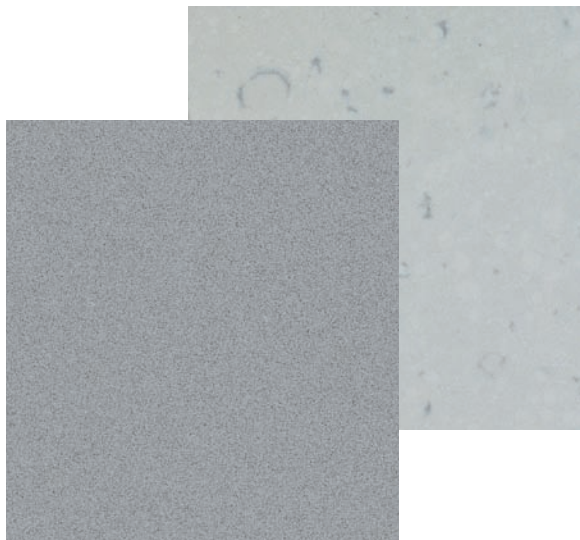
GRAY IS THE NEW WHITE
It's great for kitchens and goes with everything.

Gray walls and counters, beverage centers, distressed wood, and appliances in orange, turquoise, and other cheery colors are big design trends in kitchens. Check out those and other hot looks on the following four pages—even if you're not planning a big renovation. You can get some of the latest looks for less with our testers' do-it-yourself picks in paint, flooring, and more.

Shades of gray

All-white kitchens have been the rage in recent years. They're still popular, but more designers are shaking things up by using grays and beiges (or "greige," a combo of the two), according to the National Kitchen & Bath Association's 2014 Kitchen & Bath Style Report. Those neutrals look crisp and classic on their own and blend well with many other colors.

GET THE LOOK WITHOUT REMODELING One of the easiest ways to give your kitchen a cool and modern vibe is to paint the walls, backsplash, or cabinets a neutral shade of gray. But you have to do it right, or gray can end up giving your kitchen a chilly, industrial look. One way to warm things up is to pair gray with wood tones or energetic accent colors such as red, orange, or yellow. And be sure to choose a semigloss paint, which is the perfect finish for a kitchen because it's easy to clean.



SURFACE MATTERS

Durable, stain-resistant quartz was the top material in our last countertop tests. Bonus: Unlike marble and granite, it doesn't need to be sealed. Shown: Caesarstone's Misty Carrera, \$65 to \$85 per square foot, far left, and Cambria's Graystone, \$75 to \$85 per square foot.



NEW NEUTRALS

Clark+Kensington Semi-Gloss Enamel Smokey Eyes N-C22, \$33 per gallon, is our top semigloss. It's a decent price and is great at resisting stains.



Benjamin Moore Aura Semi-Gloss Stonington Gray HC-170, \$68 per gallon, is excellent at hiding old paint, leaves a smooth finish, and resists scrubbing.

Built-in charging stations

With more people downloading recipes, using FaceTime with friends, and reading their morning news on a tablet, the kitchen has become a hub for electronic devices. That has led to the rise of cleverly concealed charging stations showing up in drawers, utility closets, or cabinets with built-in electrical outlets and USB ports.

GET THE LOOK WITHOUT REMODELING To keep a tangle of cords from messing up your countertops, look for a freestanding multidevice charging station that looks nice when left out or that can be tucked into a cabinet. Or consider an electrical outlet with a built-in USB port, about \$20 at amazon.com. When installed on a backsplash, those outlets let you charge your phone or tablet while using the blender.

QUICK FIX

The Blu Dot Juice Box charging station, \$99 (amazon.com), doesn't require installation.



Put outlets under a shelf to create a tucked-away charging station.



Distressed wood flooring

Traditional kitchen flooring—tile, laminate, and vinyl—still has its fans, but hardwood floors are becoming more widely used in open-plan kitchens. They create a warm, seamless look between living areas. What's new is that designers are using hand-scraped, grooved, and other distressed floors because their dents and dings conceal wear and tear.

GET THE LOOK WITHOUT REMODELING You don't have to rip anything out if you install floating floors. They fit together without being glued or nailed down to a subfloor and can be laid over an old, dingy floor as long as it's flat and level. You can find floating floors made of engineered wood as well as less expensive wood-look vinyl and laminate.

DARK VS. LIGHT

Balance dark floors with light cabinets and vice versa; both looks are on trend. Shown top left: Armstrong Century Farm Hickory Natural GCH452NALG, \$6.50 per square foot. Made of engineered wood, it stood up well to scratches and stains in our tests. Left: Shaw Matrix Regency Gunstock Oak LX90100706, \$2 per square foot. The wide vinyl planks resist wear from foot traffic, stains, and sunlight.



FAB FAUX
Shaw Floors' distressed-look vinyl did great in our tests.



DRINK UP
A fully loaded beverage center includes a sink, a wine fridge, and storage.

Beverage centers

For people who entertain a lot, creating a designated spot where guests can hang out and help themselves to coffee, cocktails, and more is catching on. Beverage centers are extremely popular, often reflecting the lifestyle of the homeowners, says Sharon Olsen, a certified kitchen designer in Portland, Ore. It can be anything from a simple coffee station to the works—liquor cabinet, wine chiller, icemaker, sink, built-in coffeemaker or espresso machine, and cabinets for mugs, glasses, and supplies.

GET THE LOOK WITHOUT

REMODELING If you have space, add a pretty armoire to house wine racks, glasses, and coffee fixings. Or park a freestanding coffeemaker on a counter with wall-mounted coffee mugs above it.



COUNTERWORTHY
The Cuisinart PerfectTemp DCC-2800, \$100, combines sleek looks with primo brew performance and easy handling.

You can create a beverage center by setting aside a designated cabinet.



Sea Glass is a cool new hue on KitchenAid's Artisan Design Series 5-Quart Stand Mixer, \$399 at amazon.com.



Colorful appliances

Move over, stainless; we're seeing a lot more colorful appliance finishes. The latest design shows, including the spring 2014 Architectural Digest Home Design Show in New York, were ablaze with dishwashers, ranges, range hoods, and refrigerators in vibrant hues from high-end manufacturers. Bertazzoni, based in Italy, says that 10 percent of its appliances are sold in bold colors, including an eye-popping orange. Big

Chill, based in Colorado, offers more than 200 bright and cheery colors on its retro-style appliances. And Miele recently unveiled a subtle shade called Truffle Brown. Sounds yummy!

GET THE LOOK WITHOUT REMODELING Keep the expensive stuff—cabinets, counters, major appliances—in neutral shades and inject color with easy, affordable accents such as canisters, place mats, and small appliances.



Blue Star's 750 colors include Radiant Orchid, which is Pantone's 2014 Color of the Year.