

# 12 Hot Home Ideas

From induction cooking to relaxation retreats, these home-furnishings trends are catching fire.

By Barbara Ballinger | February 2010 Realtor Magazine

People today seek to personalize, economize, and make the most of their space—inside and out.

Today's home owners seek style and comfort, but they're ever mindful of the toll that our choices can take on the environment. These 12 home-furnishings trends reflect current priorities and aspirations. Some of these phenomena will inevitably fizzle, while others will become mainstays of the home, but for now they are attracting lots of industry and consumer buzz. Here's a rundown:

## #1 Induction cooking



**Why trendworthy:** Thirty percent more efficient than gas or electric. Cropping up in more and more homes, induction cooking uses a power coil to produce a high-frequency electromagnetic field that heats only the contents of a magnetic pan, leaving the surrounding surface cooler to the touch. By maintaining a precise temperature, it immediately stops heat generation when the cook element is turned off or cookware is removed, and it doesn't produce an open flame that heats up a kitchen, says Malte Peters, product manager for cooking products at BSH Home Appliances, parent company of Bosch and Thermador. One downside: Special cookware must be used. Retail prices range from \$1,500 to \$4,399.

## #2 Environmentally friendly cabinetry



**Why trendworthy:** Popular with green movement. With sustainable products continuing to draw fans, more kitchen and bathroom cabinets are expected to be fabricated from green materials, says John Troxell Jr., director of design at Wood-Mode Inc., a large manufacturer ([www.wood-mode.com](http://www.wood-mode.com)). But it's not materials alone that make consumers pick one line over another, Troxell says. "Where materials come from, how cabinets are manufactured, and whether they're finished without pollutants will be more important. While bamboo is renewable, it comes from halfway around the world, so is it environmentally friendly given transportation costs?" asks Troxell. He predicts greater interest in indigenous walnut and cherry, less in endangered mahogany and rosewood

### #3 Energy-sipping refrigerators



**Why trendworthy:** Pares the electricity consumption of a standard guzzler. Future refrigerators will be better insulated to improve energy efficiency. The challenge is to add insulation without reducing interior space, says Matthew Kueny, senior manager of product development at Miele, which is working to provide a solution ([www.miele.com](http://www.miele.com)). Also on the horizon: New interior lighting that's more energy-efficient and that better illuminates dark corners without distorting the look of the food,

which is common with the blue hue cast by LED lighting. Miele refrigerator-freezers start at almost \$7,000, while simpler conventional models start at \$600.

### #4 Integrated stone composite sinks



**Why trendworthy:** They blend seamlessly into a countertop for a cleaner look, plus they're more durable and easier to clean. Stainless steel sinks are still common, but stone composite designs built into a countertop are coming on strong, says Tim Maicher, director of marketing at Blanco ([www.blancoamerica.com](http://www.blancoamerica.com)). The prime motivator is growing consumer demand for easier to clean, more durable surfaces that don't scratch or stain. Blanco's Silgranit II line offers

another perk: multiple colors and textures. The designs will reflect demand for longer, deep models, yet not so deep that aging home owners have trouble setting down or removing pots and pans.

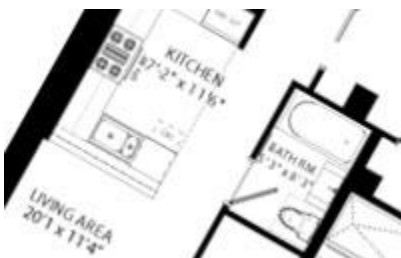
### #5 White and beige color palettes, some grays and pinks, bold accents



**Why trendworthy:** Less intense colors to calm jittery nerves. Color seers may disagree about which palette will dominate, but they note that softer backdrops are everywhere—offering serenity to soothe frayed nerves as the economy remains turbulent. Mary Lawlor, color stylist with Kelly-Moore Paints ([www.kellymoore.com](http://www.kellymoore.com)), thinks whites and beiges will remain most popular and that bright colors will provide accents. Anne McGuire and Sue Kim, affiliated with Valspar

Manufacturing Co. ([www.valspar.com](http://www.valspar.com)), see the most popular colors as water-inspired blues and greens, along with underwater corals. And Sylvia O'Brien, founder of Colour Theory ([www.colourtheory.net](http://www.colourtheory.net)), notes that earth tones provide tranquil reactions to the technical coldness in our midst and pink, especially with a pearlized finish, is popular as an accent because of its perceived healing power.

### #6 Condo home offices



**Why trendworthy:** To help home owners maximize small spaces—and obtain a tax deduction. Owners of single-family homes have long been able to convert a bedroom, den, or basement to an office, but down the road more condo buyers and apartment renters will find homes with small, dedicated spaces for business use, says Robert Kaliner, president of the Ascend Group, developer of the luxury Georgica condominiums in New York, where each glass-wrapped

unit will have a home office ([www.georgicany.com](http://www.georgicany.com)). Steve Kliegerman, executive director at Halstead

Development, which is marketing units with home offices in another New York building, The Fitzgerald ([www.thefitzgeraldcondos.com](http://www.thefitzgeraldcondos.com)) in Harlem, sees a couple of factors behind the trend: Older, retrofitted office buildings tend to come with nooks that lend themselves to becoming small offices, and the home office tax deduction gives these spaces special appeal.

### #7 Interior wall treatments besides paint



**Why trendworthy:** Easier to install; more personalized patterns, colors, textures. Less popular in recent years, wall treatments other than paint are making a comeback, says Atlanta-based interior designer Brian Patrick Flynn, who cites several reasons: new bolder graphic wallpaper patterns, some in shiny metallics and textured leathers, and easier and less costly application due to new primers. Wallpaper is cropping up on a single focal wall, which saves money.

Flynn predicts more home owners will cover an entire wall with an enlarged photo printed in sections.

### #8 Do-it-yourself projects



**Why trendworthy:** Less costly, more personal. The DIY trend keeps growing as home owners look to cut costs and return to basics. Instruction is readily available in classes, on the Web, and in books. Example: Designer Fu-Tung Cheng ([www.chengdesign.com](http://www.chengdesign.com)), who helped make concrete a chic, green material for interior surfaces, is now helping even nonhandy home owners construct concrete countertops with his book and DVD, *Concrete Countertops Made*

*Simple* (Taunton Press, 2008). "The DIY movement represents a trend away from overly complex projects that require professional expertise. The simpler designs are also more timeless and individualistic and more likely to touch the heart," Cheng says.

### #9 Outdoor curtains



**Why trendworthy:** Even backyard "rooms" require some privacy. As more people construct "rooms" in their backyards for purposes such as swimming, cooking and eating, and relaxing under a pergola, the need for curtains has arisen. New fabrics stand up better to outdoor conditions and visually soften hardscape surfaces. They also screen out nosy neighbors, says designer Flynn. Fabric runs \$12 to \$80 per square foot, plus installation.

### #10 Dual-flush, environmentally efficient toilets, plus more healthful designs



**Why trendworthy:** Greater recognition that liquid and solid waste have different flush requirements. Though widely available abroad, dual-flush toilets—with separate mechanisms to handle liquid or solid waste—are gaining attention here, says Lenora Campos with Toto USA, a leading toilet manufacturer ([www.totousa.com](http://www.totousa.com)). The main challenge isn't convincing home owners to buy the models, she says, but getting them to remember to use the right button. More

companies may follow Toto's lead to construct toilets with glazed concave rims and water nozzles that repel bacteria and wall-mounted models that make cleaning underneath easier. Toto's Aquia II dual-flush models run from \$457 to \$686, while the company's conventional single-flush models range from \$350 to \$525.

### #11 3-D HDTV



**Why trendworthy:** Images are becoming more lifelike. HDTVs display a beautiful picture, but they can't offer a 3-D presentation like your local IMAX movie theater does. The reason: True high-definition 3-D in the home currently lacks a standard and is still too expensive for most consumers. That should change, in part because electronics manufacturers are developing a standard format. When that happens, prices should drop, says Dave Pedigo, senior director of technology for CEDIA (the Custom Electronic Design and Installation Association), a national trade association.

### #12 Relaxation retreats



**Why trendworthy:** Increased need to unwind. Who cares about a home being a castle when most just want a place to unwind? Atlanta architect Johnna Barrett ([www.barrettdesigninc.com](http://www.barrettdesigninc.com)) has designed several relaxation rooms, where creature comforts include natural materials, color kinetics, programmable LED lighting, candlelight, aromatherapy, a sound-blocking machine, flat-panel TV with DVD player, refrigerator with purified water, and a door. Depending on room size and amenities included, a retreat room could cost from \$3,000 to \$10,000. ■

