

A fresh, luxe take on traditional design

Lindsey Rowe



Christopher Peacock, inventor of the Prada of kitchens.

If you think Christopher Peacock's kitchens look familiar, that's because they are ubiquitous among the wealthy and copied by the masses, and similar versions have appeared in almost every shelter magazine on newsstands.

They cost \$75,000 to \$125,000, so only the upper tier can afford the Prada of kitchens. But Peacock's style is universally appealing: clean, classic design with stainless-steel appliances, marble countertops, white cabinets and cabinet hardware that shines like pure silver. "What I've become known for is typically a fresh, traditional style," Peacock says. "Rather than it being stodgy traditional, it's sort of up-to-date."

As a young British lad, Peacock aspired to be a professional musician. Instead, he fell into kitchen design. To pay the bills, he drove a truck for a cabinet company in London, but he was soon exposed to the design aspects of the business and found he was good at it.

"It opened up a new world of design to me," he says. He moved to Boston to work for another kitchen cabinet company, Siematic, then went to New York, where he opened his own shop in 1992.

Now, with offices in San Francisco, Los Angeles, Chicago, Connecticut and Boston, Christopher Peacock Cabinetry will design cabinetry for any room in the house. It also sells a high-end line of paints and furniture. Later this year, Peacock will introduce new products and kitchen styles, including a more affordable design.

All company products are made at a workshop about 100 miles west of Washington in Wardensville, W.Va., where a showroom is planned to open within nine months. We spoke with Peacock by telephone from his office in Greenwich, Conn.

Why do you think the Christopher Peacock look is so popular and copied?

I think that's because people understand it. And like with anything that classic, it stands the test of time. When one installs cabinetry into the home, one expects that it will be there for many, many years. The danger with very fashionable kitchens is that they become boring or out of fashion or out of style. From the point of a real estate investment, kitchens and bathrooms are the most important rooms of the house. I think that that's why people like what

I do. They see it as classic; they see it as elegant. People ask me if I worry about [being] copied, but I don't. I think I should worry when I stop being copied.

What does your own kitchen in Connecticut look like?

It's a white kitchen, and it's not because I felt the need to put in what I'm known for. I didn't exactly have a choice: My home life includes my wife, and she really wanted that. I think personally I felt the need to do something a little different than something that I see a lot. I felt the pressure to be more creative than normal. [But] my wife really felt it was the right look for the house we were in, and she was right. We have a white kitchen, which is very elegant, very simple. It's a busy house -- we have three sons -- and it works for us. I think my wife was the very typical client in that she wanted the flexibility and the longevity of it.

The kettle. I drink a lot of tea. . . . I also have a range, which I love. I really enjoy cooking and don't get to do it as often as I like. I have a Wolf range, which has a French top. It is a hot plate that you can put several pots on at once. There's a burner located under the middle of the steel, and the heat dissipates from the center to the edge. You can move a pot from the edge to the center as it's ready to heat. It's great to cook with.

What are some of the biggest mistakes people make when renovating a kitchen?

They don't spend enough money. I'm not trying to be facetious. People need to understand the value of putting a good kitchen into a home. If they're serious about doing something serious, then they have to commit to it and do it right. I think the other mistake people make is in the design process. They forget to really think about how they live in their space. People think they're going to live differently once they renovate their space. When they're looking through the design, they think they're going to change all of their habits. The design process has to be quite specific for the individual, and there has to be soul-searching into what they really do and how they use their space.

Can you offer some inexpensive things a homeowner can do to upgrade a kitchen?

Put some great paint on the walls. Maybe you want to change the hardware on the cabinetry, a new light fixture. Even the smaller things, like some new dishes, or some new dish towels or something.

You have said that the best kitchen is a small galley. Why?

What small kitchens do is they force efficiency. We see some massive kitchens, but if you see how people use those kitchens. [He pauses.] They'll stand in one place and use four feet of countertops to prepare a meal. While they might use a lot of storage, 75 [percent] of that storage isn't used that often. A small kitchen forces you to cook with fresh food more often, because you haven't got a lot of storage. Because it's a small space you're forced to be efficient. . . . It's easy to clean up. We get to see some very large, incredible spaces. But our challenge is to make them function in a small area, to make it efficient and simple to use, to make the person who is creating the meal not run around the kitchen.

Washington Post, Washington, 5 mar. 2009, Arts & Living, online. Disponível em <www.washingtonpost.com>. Acesso em: 13 mar. 2009.