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Variety And Complexity Are Key In

CABINET FINISHES

BY LEE ANN FLICKINGER

More and more, homeowners are requesting kitchen designs that are uniquely their own. Individuality is important, not only to those purchasing kitchens in the higher price range, but to consumers in the mid-range as well.

"It is important to listen to [a client's] needs," says Lorna Rhine, interior designer with Cabitron Fine Kitchen and Bath Cabinetry, Manalapan, NJ. "You must qualify their budget and tell them price issues off the bat. If there is no budget, you can go for a full custom cabinet line. If not, show them your semi-custom lines and listen carefully to their needs to help them choose the right options."

The highest end custom cabinet line Rhine works with is Craft-Maid Kitchens Inc. located in Reading, PA. The custom company will create any finish or hand-carved designs requested by its 175 dealers and designers.

"We will do whatever it takes to help you get the

sale," says Craft-Maid CEO Jerry Goldberg. "We find the key to our success is to create a design element that is a signature of the job—an element that no other manufacturer can match," he adds. The emphasis is on complete originality.

Craft-Maid recently compiled 90 of the custom samples that have been created over the years. Each color in the library has been given a name and sent to kitchen dealers to serve as a consultation tool and starting point for project planning. Still, Goldberg estimates his finish expert, Keith Weber has created 600 finishes or more in his eight years with the company, some with as many as 11 steps involved. Any custom finish can be created, he notes.

"People are looking for combinations of new colors. We have a few new colors with names such as sun-dried tomato or mint chocolate chip. We have many colors we can't get by using just one color," says Goldberg.

The trend in custom cabinetry is away from solid paints and toward multi-step finishes, Goldberg says, noting that it has trickled into lower price points as well. "It used to be sand, seal and top coat, then we went to glazes that hang in corners for an older look. We are way beyond that now. We



"The most popular finishes Craft-Maid does today are done by hand, creating unique brush strokes and textures," Goldberg says.

Craft-Maid will replicate any carving design its clients create. This bath vanity and sink base (top left, top right) were custom made and painted by hand by Craft-Maid artisans. Craft-Maid can produce custom projects in a standard 12 week lead time. The free-standing island (bottom left) is finished with an antique paint in mustard with distressing to further the antique theme.



are doing hand carvings and hand-painting with brush strokes. You can see that the brush strokes change direction. That's the appeal." The most popular finishes Craft-Maid does today are done by hand, creating unique brush strokes and textures, he says.

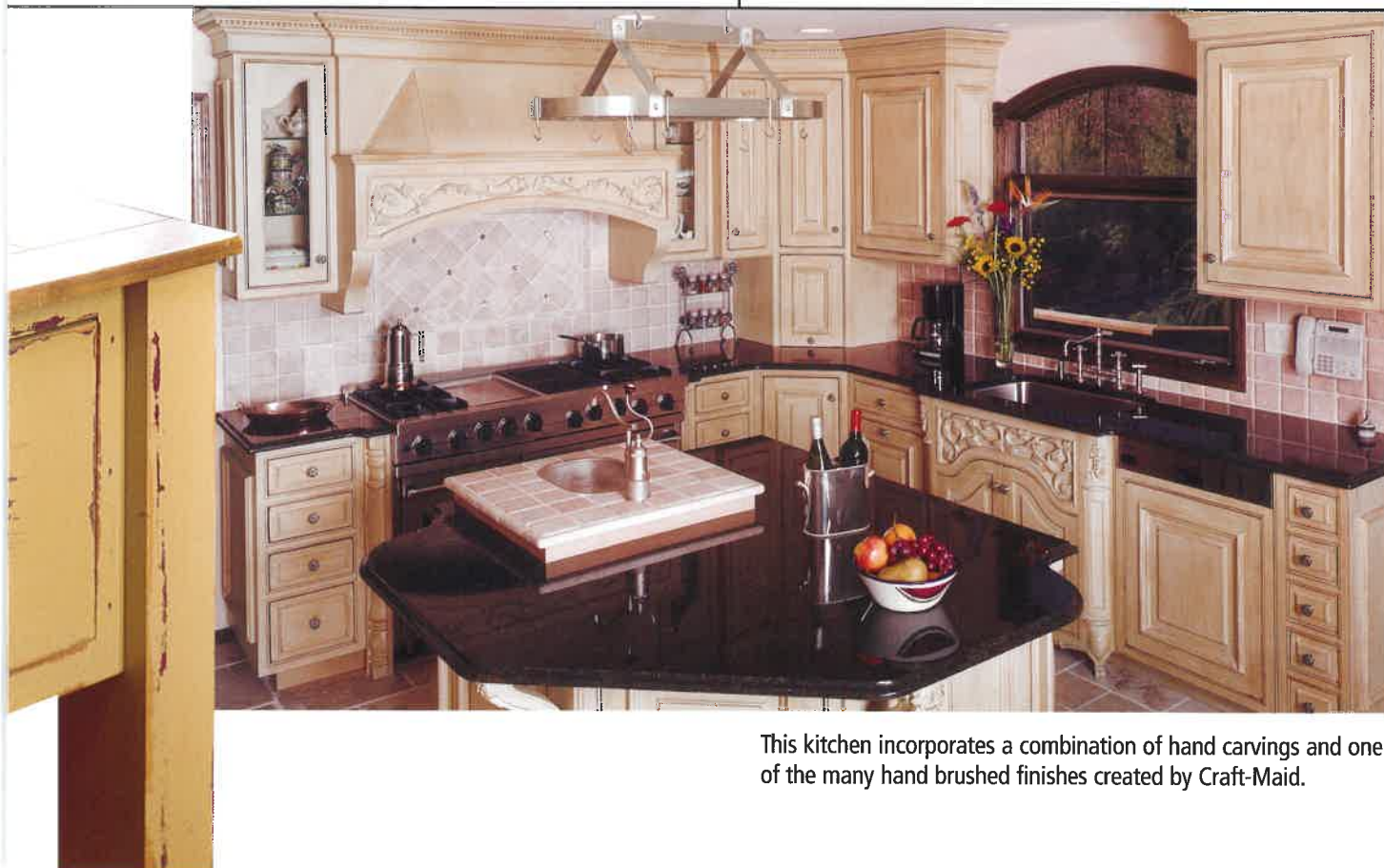
Nowhere is this emphasis on originality seen more than in Craft-Maid's approach to finishes, one of its defining specialties. Craft-Maid has been asked by customers to create cabinets to

match any number of items: existing paint, fabric, wallpaper, or antique finishes. Items that have come in for matching include a 150-year-old drawer, a tiny stamp-sized photo that had to be enlarged before the image was clear enough to re-create, and stone from a wall, a surface with numerous colorations. Even a 15-year-old, well-weathered lawn chair, which

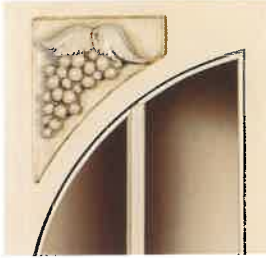
the customer wanted to use as the basis to create an atmosphere throughout the entire house.

And this kind of work cannot be accomplished in just a sample. Any finish Craft-Maid develops must be replicated across an entire spectrum of surfaces on a cabinet, so very accurate records have to be kept. It's important to make sure that there is enough individuality from piece to piece so the finish avoids looking like a continued pattern. Each door has to be realistic, random, and natural. Some customers want each door to be like an individual work of art. But a door is a work of art that is in daily use in the tough environment of the kitchen, subject to grease, heat, moisture, cleaning chemicals, and a lot of wear.

Craft-Maid works in 12 basic woods: mahogany, cherry, clear pine, select pine, knotty pine, maple, birch, red oak, white oak, and walnut. Exotic veneers include, among others, Andes rosewood, lacewood, Brazilian koa, madrone burl, camphorwood burl, makore, sapele, movingui and tamo ash. And Craft-Maid also offers some woods that are extinct: recycled heart pine – heavier than oak and strong as steel – taken from the beams of torn down Pennsylvania barns, and wormy chestnut from trees that died of blight. Such reclaimed wood offers the marks



This kitchen incorporates a combination of hand carvings and one of the many hand brushed finishes created by Craft-Maid.



of distinction – cracks and nail holes – that many discriminating customers cherish.

In addition to finishes, Craft-Maid takes pride and wins customers for its dealers with its unique hand-carving service. Subcontractors can take on virtually any customer demand, from roses and pears, to clouds and

cats, to a fisherman casting on one panel and landing a catch on a panel across the room. Unlike some manufacturers, all of the Craft-Maid images are unique and are never mass-produced.

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Custom turnings also let Craft-Maid dealers promise unique designs. One popular look in kitchen cabinetry is to make it look more like furniture, supported on ornate legs, says Goldberg. Such work takes close attention to proportion, in addition to other challenges, and Craft-Maid is known for its ability to capture this look.

Featured on the Craft-Maid web site, the furniture look caught the attention of a net-surfing Fonda Huizinga, wife of H. Wayne Huizinga, owner of professional football’s Miami Dolphins. For two years, she’d searched for a designer who understood the look, and so called Craft-Maid early the next morning to get a referral. Other



major clients include such sports notables as Pat Croce of basketball’s Philadelphia 76ers, the Minnesota Twins’ Frank Viola, and Lee Jansen, professional golfer.

Indeed, customers so cherish the unique Craft-Maid look that it is not out of the ordinary for customers’ wedding pictures to be snapped in front of unique handcarved cabinetry the company has created. It’s no wonder, then, that Craft-Maid promises its dealers that it can help them “design cabinets without fear of competition.”

For information about Craft-Maid Kitchens Inc., Reading, PA, call 610.376.8686, or email us from our web site at www.craft-maid.com.



Just some of Craft-Maid’s many finish colors.

Please view actual wood sample before making your final color selection.



BASIL PESTO



BISCUIT



BLACK OLIVE JUBILEE



CAPPUCCINO



CAFE LATTÉ



CREAMSICLE



MINT CHOCOLATE CHIP



PEPPERCORN



SOUR CREAM & CHIVES



SUN DRIED TOMATO