

AD PRO: Kitchen Forecast 2024: The Professional's Guide to Today's Culinary Spaces June 26, 2024

Leading designers weigh in on the state of kitchen design in this new trend report from AD PRO. From layouts to appliances, sinks to surfaces, here are the ideas ruling the hottest room in the house

The Great Sink Debate: Are We Over the Apron Front?

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As the popularity of the modern farmhouse aesthetic—and its preferred sink style—endures, designers debate if they're ready for a fixture change

After years of service in kitchens everywhere, from HGTV renovations to suburban McMansions, the modern farmhouse aesthetic might be said to be neither particularly modern nor farmhouse. But the farmhouse sink, and its close cousin the apron front, seem to persist. What makes them so popular? And are they really as timeless as they once seemed?

While the terms are often used interchangeably, the apron-front sink usually rests above kitchen cabinetry or millwork, as opposed to the farmhouse's flush installation. Either way, both sinks offer a utilitarian appeal. "They are quite efficient, space-wise, as they can be a bit larger than an undermount or drop-in sink, which have to fit inside the cabinet walls," says New York architect Sarah Jacoby. Danville, Virginia-based designer Nancy Parrish agrees. "The deep basin of farmhouse sinks provides plenty of space for washing large pots and pans, soaking dishes, and even bathing small pets, improving kitchen workflow," she notes. "Additionally, the forward orientation of an apron sink eliminates the need to reach over a countertop edge to access the bottom of the sink, reducing strain on the back and arms when lifting heavy objects."

The form charms too. "It's deeply tied to nostalgia for the 'countryside estate,'" posits CCY Architects partner Maura Trumble. "It achieves the cottagecore look that's been trending," agrees kitchen designer, pro chef, and *Kitchen Glow Up* host Ellen Marie Bennett. While apron-front and farmhouse sinks may feel conservative in the traditional sense, architect Andrew Magnes argues they are also conservationist. "I like that they celebrate a water source and all of the activities where we use it," he says. (Think of the apron front as a kind of kitchen mindfulness.)

But that doesn't mean it's always the best option for a new kitchen. San Francisco architect Anand Sheth, for one, thinks it's time to move on. "My clients wanted a farmhouse/apron sink in their Noe Valley residence in San Francisco, and we worked it into the streamlined, warm, modern palette of the lofty kitchen," he says. "But we had numerous detail issues, as the irregular rounded corners interacted with our natural marble counters. In the end we made it work, but I swore off this sink style forever!"

“Classics will be classics.”

— Lorena Vieyra

Sometimes, a sleeker sink can be more practical and endearing. “Classics will be classics,” says Lorena Vieyra, [OMET](#) creative director and founder of [Vieyra Estudio](#). “However, I personally lean toward an integrated sink that blends with the countertop, so there are no boundaries.” For a food photographer’s kitchen, [Kallos Turin](#) cofounder Abigail Turin chose open front cabinets to expose the undermount sink’s body and plumbing. “But you still have a long, clean line of stone counter, which would have been broken if we had done a traditional apron sink,” she explains. Trumble, too, thinks undermount sinks deserve a fresh look. “They’ve evolved into multifunction kitchen workstations,” she says, “with the introduction of integrated draining and drying areas, removable racks, and bins for food prep, colanders for draining, and integrated cutting boards.” Jacoby also reports an uptick in working kitchens along with a return of the classic [stainless-steel sink](#). “We’re always looking for something with longevity,” she says. “And it can really hold up!”

At the same time, Becca Roderick of AD PRO Directory firm Morris Adjmi Architects says the firm’s clients love the practicalities of the farmhouse sink. “We’ve used them at two hotel projects recently, The Pinch in Charleston and the soon-to-open Forth in Atlanta,” she says. “Both are firmly rooted in a Southern, traditional aesthetic and meant to evoke a feeling of comfort that a farmhouse sink certainly provides.” For the professional chefs who work in such kitchens, Bennett endorses anything with sufficient width and depth. “I always recommend a 36-inch sink, which is key to fitting large pots and trays without constant banging on the edges,” she says. “An inset sink is a beautiful design that doesn’t sacrifice on functionality,” unlike a divided sink. “I avoid that like the plague. It’s a chef’s nightmare,” she cautions.

Design brands, meanwhile, are concocting ways to refresh the apron front. “They can be made of any material, from fireclay to stainless steel,” says Moen’s senior creative style manager Danielle DeBoe Harper. “We’re seeing consumers embrace the idea of personalization, owning their signature style.” When it comes to traditional or transitional design, says Rachel Thompson, partner at architecture firm Northworks, “there are so many finishes and configurations available now that there is something for everyone.” Perhaps its very pervasiveness lends the apron-front sink “blank state” status, ready for customization.

For clients in search of authenticity, though, designers recommend keeping in mind the old chestnut: location, location, location. “The only time we would suggest the [apron-front] sink currently,” says Nivek Remas cofounder Kevin Chan, “is potentially for a laundry room application, or maybe a cottage/countryside one.” In other words, that farmhouse look might be best reserved for actual farmhouses, modern or not. —Jesse Dorris