

By Jody Marquez Wood

# Hearthwood Kitchen and Bath

Ask any realtor and you'll find that your kitchen and bathroom are the two most important rooms in your house relative to assessing your home's value and the amount of time your family spends in each. For these reasons, residential kitchen and bath remodeling projects have been on the rise in recent years and it's a trend that shows no signs of slowing down.

If you're interested in differentiating your kitchen design from the "look and feel" representative of the mass-produced, prefabricated cabinets and countertops, perhaps one of the most important aspects of the process is in finding a qualified contractor who specializes in custom work. According to scores of satisfied customers, one high-end Huntington Beach-based cabinet company sets itself apart from the competition by its owner's "attention to detail, excellent craftsmanship and unparalleled customer service."

Serving our coastal city for the past 13 years, John Stephany of Hearthwood Kitchen and Bath says that "a kitchen is now a much more important part of the house that it once was."

"It used to be that the kitchen was essentially closed off from the rest of the house whereas now it tends to be the center of activity," he says. "Some clients are looking to increase the value of their homes for re-sale, however, the majority of my customers are people who have lived in their home for a long time and want to turn their kitchen into a 'dream' kitchen in terms of its functionality for family gatherings and entertaining."

Stephany, a general contractor and custom cabinet maker, whose scope of services includes complete kitchen and bath remodeling, entertainment centers, home offices and fine finish carpentry, adds that "providing these services gives me an advantage in managing entire home remodeling projects."

"Because custom cabinetry is the foundation of my kitchen remodeling projects and the cabinets are designed and built at our shop, I can guarantee that the cabinets are ready for installation prior to any construction activity in the customer's home," he says. "This means less downtime for my customers in terms of use of the room and the least amount of disruption during the project period. Providing my customers with a



high quality product and adhering to a timeline is extremely important. Proper management of subcontractors is also an important part of any remodeling project. I really strive to maintain timing, open lines of communication and make sure I'm always accessible to the client so they know they can always get in touch with me at any time during their renovation project."

In fact, unlike many of his counterparts, Stephany is "a one-job at a time contractor" which translates to a more individualized approach to his work.

"There might be some overlap if we're waiting for countertops to go in," he says. "But generally speaking, I won't be juggling jobs and will be completely dedicated to the individual project I'm working on from start to finish."

While some of his customers know exactly what they want, the majority has only a general idea. For this reason, Stephany



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often meets with clients several times to determine their individual needs and desires.

"Before we get to work on drawings, I'll work with clients to figure out what they are looking for from a functionality standpoint and the motivation behind the renovation," he says. "From that point, we can begin to develop a layout and there's going to be a lot of ongoing dialogue until we get some drawings going. Then I'll put in a bid and give them some drawings based on what we collaboratively come up with."

Because his work is customized for each client, Stephany can design custom cabinetry that works with the available space as opposed to prefabricated cabinetry, which may need fillers in order to fit.

"I can go off of any idea," he says. "I try to get my customers to give me some pictures or ideas of what they like – whether they clip ideas from magazines or take photos of a friend's kitchen, it's helpful to understand their vision. The challenge in this business is to be able to take people's ideas and concepts and make them unfold in such a way that they are happy with the final result."

From this standpoint, Stephany seems to have it covered – drawing accolades from local residents and HB-based business owners and professionals like Dominic and Kristy Iorfino, co-owners of HB Digital Arts.

"We've gone through several remodeling projects with our home and we have had the pleasure of John working on two of our bathrooms and most recently our kitchen," says Dominic Iorfino. "His professionalism and craftsmanship are evident in every step of the project. He brings his experience and love of what he does to the table every time and it shows. When our guests and friends are over, we'll always hear a positive comment on both the bathrooms and kitchen. He has helped us to create an environment that is beautiful, functional and most of all, one we are proud of."

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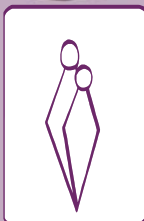
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