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It's that time of year – time to spruce up your home and look at what's on trend. In this edition, we look at the latest colors, the latest looks, the latest kitchen amenities. Thanks to experts around Siouxland, we're able to offer those little touches that could just make you feel like you've moved somewhere new. Get your pad and paper. It's time to make a list.



ON THE COVER

Furniture pieces with rounded corners are making an impact in homes, according to Lisa Kalaher from Mod House Interiors. Photograph by *Tim Hynds*

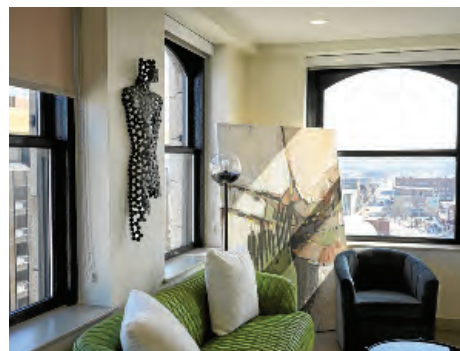
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4 ABOUT THOSE APARTMENTS

We get a chance to peek into the new Badgerow Flats and what it has to offer in terms of downtown living.



36 A HOME BAR

If you want more than a six-pack and a bottle of whiskey, you might want to invest in other spirits and create your own home bar.



40 CHEFS SQUARE OFF

Two chefs talk about the benefits and drawbacks of stoves. Gas? Electric? They give you their takes.



Leasing agent Susan Wells is shown in the kitchen area in an 11th floor apartment at Badgerow Flats. Wells said many of the 70 one-bedroom apartments have already been rented.

BACK TO THE FUTURE

Badgerow Flats offers expansive views of downtown in modern, Art Deco setting

Text by Dolly A. Butz | Photographs by Tim Hynds



Original, decorative Badgerow signage is shown on the Badgerow Building in downtown Sioux City.

A newly renovated Art Deco building offers residents modern, airy living spaces with dramatic views of downtown Sioux City.

Badgerow Flats, located on floors 3-11 of the historic 12-story Badgerow Building, 622 Fourth St., is now leasing 70 one-bedroom apartments.

Susan Wells, regional portfolio manager for Seldin Company, described the living spaces, which rent for a minimum of \$845 a month, as “smartly laid out.”

“The leasing here is going a lot faster than we anticipated. It has been very, very popular,” she said. “We have rented a lot of apartments. Most of our clientele are coming from out of state, and they’re coming here to work. We’re happy we can help revitalize downtown.”



The iconic main floor lobby with elevators and original marble walls.



Above: An 11th floor apartment with views of Historic Fourth Street. Right: A 12th floor tenant lounge.
Below: A skylight is shown in the 12th floor lobby outside of Badgerow Flats' tenant lounge.



“We have rented a lot of apartments. Most of our clientele are coming from out of state, and they’re coming here to work. We’re happy we can help revitalize downtown.”

*Susan Wells,
regional portfolio manager
for Seldin Company*

Omaha-based Clarity Development, Inc. rehabilitated the long-vacant building, which was red-tagged for some time, into a mixed-use facility. The project’s total budget was \$25 million, with construction costs coming in at around \$16.5 million.

Enter though the south door off of Jackson Street, and you’ll find the elevators to your right. The Badgerow’s iconic main floor lobby features original marble walls, terrazzo floors, mirrors and a mail chute. Wells said the light fixtures were changed out and a bit of wallpaper was added to finish off the space.



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Tenant mailboxes are shown in a restored bank vault at Badgerow Flats in downtown Sioux City.



Tenant mailboxes are shown in a restored bank vault.

The leasing office is located on the first floor, as are the tenant mailboxes, which just happen to be in a restored bank vault. Just outside the mailroom, Wells said residents will be able to enjoy a self-serve Starbucks coffee bar, which will be open 24 hours a day.

“Down here on the first floor, there was a two-story restaurant back in the day. So, we’re trying to find a restaurant to lease the space,” said Wells, who said a fitness center is also planned for the first floor. “We have some commercial space also available to build out or to lease on the second floor and, then, on the 12th floor, with the amazing views up there.”



The ground floor elevators at Badgerow Flats in downtown Sioux City.



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“They’re really good floor plans, so it doesn’t feel like they’re 700 square feet.”

Susan Wells,
regional portfolio manager
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A bed in an 11th floor apartment at Badgerow Flats.



A kitchen in one of the apartments.

Wells noted that “tons of parking stalls” have been rented from the city in the Discovery and Heritage ramps, so there will be ample parking for tenants and customers.

The apartment floor plans are named after various cities — Chicago, Denver, Miami, Las Vegas, Wells said Sioux City just happens to be the most popular floor plan.

“They’re really good floor plans, so it doesn’t feel like they’re 700 square feet,” she said.

The apartments feature quartz countertops, deep blue cabinetry, stainless steel appliances, globe pendant lighting and large windows with shades.



A bathroom is shown in an 11th floor apartment at Badgerow Flats.

Some of the apartments have an island in the kitchen in addition to a breakfast bar. The bedrooms are carpeted with walk-in closets, while the open concept kitchen, living and dining spaces have Marmoleum flooring.

“The gold fixtures in the bathroom are

unusual for an apartment community. You’ll also notice a really modern rectangle deep tub with glass doors,” Wells said as she showed off one of the apartments.

Every apartment has its own washer and dryer and built-in internet.

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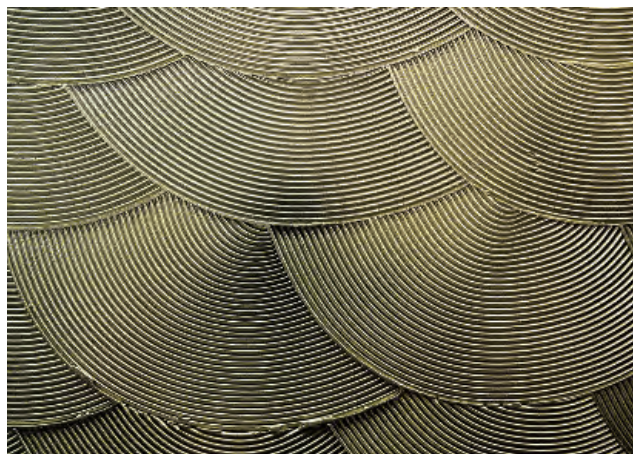
Above: A seating area with views of Historic Fourth Street is shown in a 12th floor tenant lounge at Badgerow Flats. **Right:** Hand-troweled drywall floor mud is used to provide an accent wall outside a tenant lounge at Badgerow Flats. **Bottom:** A portion of a mail chute is shown on the ground floor at the Badgerow Flats. Note the old school Zip Code illustration.

“The residents pay \$50 a month for it, but they don’t have to come with any equipment,” Wells said of the internet.

After taking the elevator all the way to the top floor, you’ll pass a sky-lit atrium as you walk to the SkyView Lounge, an area that residents can use for relaxation, entertainment or work.

The lounge has expansive views of the city, a bar and multiple seating areas. The décor features moody Art Deco colors — black, gray, red and green.

“The idea is, again with the under 700 square feet, somebody could come up here and they could work. They could have a cup of coffee. They could have friends over. They can order a pizza. They can have a party, or just get out of their apartment for a minute,” Wells said. “We’ll hold some events up here monthly for the residents or, at least, quarterly. They can rent it out if they have a baby shower or a bridal shower.”



A mail chute is shown on the ground floor at the Badgerow Flats in downtown Sioux City, Iowa. Rehabilitating the long-empty building is almost complete and apartments are being readied for leasing. The mailbox will continue to be used.

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Kathie Pfaffle, a professional home stager, stands in a “man cave” she has staged in a home listed for sale at 174 Saddlebrook Court in Dakota Dunes, South Dakota. Pfaffle said one of the keys to staging a home for a successful sale is to work with neutral colors.

THE RULES OF STAGING

Homeowners have a chance to boost appeal for buyers

Text by Dolly A. Butz | Photographs by Tim Hynds

Kathie Pfaffle arranges furniture, hangs artwork and adds various home accessories in effort to make houses look more appealing to buyers.

Pfaffle, a professional real estate agent, officially founded her home staging business, Staging Siouxland, in the fall of 2021. She has a vast inventory of couches, chairs, bedding, rugs, wall art, pillows and more that she utilizes to help Siouxlanders sell their homes beautifully, quickly and profitably.

“Staging is really more for the event

of selling a home. Interior design, of course, is for more permanent life. That being said, they go hand in hand,” Pfaffle said, as she stood in the “man cave” of a Dakota Dunes home, 174 Saddlebrook Court. Pfaffle staged the five-bedroom, three-bathroom home, which is available for sale with NextHome Tristate Reality.

Pfaffle said the original plan was to hang a bison hide on a neutral wall in the “man cave,” but that particular hide was just too onerous. So, Pfaffle affixed three

gold discs to the wall instead.

Pfaffle tried placing the hide on the room’s floor, but it also seemed too big there. The homeowner, who works for Tyson and is relocating to Arkansas, sent Pfaffle a photo of another hide he could procure from his employer.

“I said, ‘I love that! I think we should use it.’ Within half an hour, he had it delivered,” she said. “I just thought that was such a cool facet of the project, to incorporate somebody’s life. They’re changing their entire life for his job.”



Kathie Pfaffle, a professional home stager, talks about home staging in a “man cave” she has staged in a home listed for sale at 174 Saddlebrook Court in Dakota Dunes, South Dakota.



One of the keys to staging a home for a successful sale is to work with neutral colors.



STAGING PROCESS

When a potential client approaches Pfaffle about staging a property, the first questions she asks are, “How big is it?” and “How many spaces are there?”

If the job seems like a good fit for her, Pfaffle said the next step is visiting the home and having a more in-depth conversation with the homeowner.

“It helps me really visualize how

to set up the space and what types of items I want to put in the space,” she said.

Then, Pfaffle puts together a proposal. She uses Canva, an online graphic design tool, to create digital vignettes of the furnishings and accessories she plans to use in a particular room.

Pfaffle said her goal is to make the space as appealing and neutral as

possible to increase buyer interest.

“Sometimes, it’s as easy as going in and saying, ‘Let me move this couch to this wall,’ and it creates better flow for a space,” she said. “Just rearranging some furniture and, maybe, giving them little pointers — ‘I like this décor, but I think this stuff really dates your house or takes away from the house, so we should eliminate this.’”



Kathie Pfaffle, a professional home stager talks about a set of vases and candlesticks in a “man cave” she has staged in a home.



Little touches can make a big difference in a home.

LESS IS MORE

Pack away those family photos, or, at least reduce the number of them that are sitting out.

Pfaffle said the “less is more” rule also applies when it comes to furniture, decorative objects and other personal items.

“You just really want your space to look as spacious as possible. The more items and the more décor and the more clutter you have in a space, it’s hard for people to focus on what they’re supposed to focus on, which is the space at hand,” she said.

LIGHTER IS BETTER

Pfaffle recommends neutralizing wild paint colors, which could deter buyers.

“Nobody’s going to balk at a gray or a white or a tan. Anybody can move in and live with it,” she said.

Pfaffle also noted that light colors make spaces feel larger.

“Although we’re seeing trends with interior design and darker colors, I don’t



ever recommend that, unless somebody really knows what they're doing, or, they have an expert's assistance," she said.

START EARLY

Pfaffle said sellers should start working with a real estate agent as soon as possible to prepare their home for sale.

"Living in your home and selling your home are two different things," she said.

From start to finish, Pfaffle said it takes her two to three weeks to stage a home. That timeframe includes the presentation and formalization of the plan, installation and cleanup.

"Start early and come up with a plan. People don't know how much time it takes to get their house ready," she said. "Starting early gives everybody a good enough chance to get things done as thoroughly as possible and as best as possible."

For more information, visit Staging Siouxland on Facebook and Instagram, or email Pfaffle at kathie@kathiepfaffle.com.

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Above: This interior mockup from Diamond Vogel shows Moonrose, one of its four 2023 Feature Colors, on the wall at the left. Diamond Vogel's annual Color Trends report calls Moonrose a "spirited" shade of red. **Right:** A swatch of the paint color Moonrose is shown. Moonrose is one of Diamond Vogel's four 2023 Feature Colors.

COLORS OF YEARS PAST

The following are previous Diamond Vogel Color of the Year picks:

2022: Zenith (a deep-blue color)

2021: Dreaming of the Day (a soft blue-green color)

2020: Silence is Golden (a gold color)

2019: Day Spa (a saturated navy color)

2018: Atmospheric Pressure (a soft lavender-blue)



Diamond Vogel's Feature Colors for this year are:

- Moonrose, described in the Color Trends Report as a "spirited" shade of red that delivers "a spark of modern energy and optimism."

• Ranch House, a "deep brown" that "pairs well with earth-inspired accents to create a feeling of strength and reflection."

• Fresh Start, "an upbeat green that delivers energy and youthful fun."

• Calm Interlude, "an ultra-deep blue green," a shade described in the Color Report as "classic and calming yet modern." Blue colors have in recent years reigned supreme among Diamond Vogel's Color of the Year picks — between 2018 and 2022, only once did the Color of the Year not fall somewhere in the blue or blue-ish spectrum.

None of these colors is a loner. Diamond Vogel grouped each of them with their own color families — or palettes — consisting of four additional colors suggested to pair well with the main Feature Color. The Moonrose palette, for instance, includes Thistle Gray (a gray color), Summer Beige (a pink-ish shade), Elusive White (a "warm" white) and Stony Field (a dark brown-ish color).

Each of the Feature Colors is relatively intense; for that reason, Agar-Studelska said, they work well as accents — used to paint a single wall, for instance. Ideally that wouldn't be a wall that already has a lot going on (so, not the wall that the big TV is affixed to, nor the wall festooned with art).

Though they're largely intended for the interior, the daring could try the Feature Colors as accents for the exterior

PICK A COLOR

One wasn't enough for Diamond Vogel's list

Text by *Mason Dockter* | Photographs by *Diamond Vogel*

Challenging times call for colors, and lots of them.

So much so that Diamond Vogel, the Orange City-based maker of paints, decided this year, for the first time, to highlight not one Color of the Year, but a group of four "Feature Colors" in its annual Color Trends Report.

"The theme this year was 'Momentum to New Beginnings,'" said Sandy Agar-Studelska, marketing

manager at Diamond Vogel. "There's certainly a lot of pressure that all of us have — including families and homeowners — with the economy and inflation and things like that.

"We're always looking for new ways to express ourselves. And we might not always be able to do that on the exterior of our home with color, but we can certainly do it within our home," she added.

— a door could be painted with Fresh Start, for instance, or the shutters could be painted with Ranch House.

“They pair so nicely, too, with those that have a lot of gray in their home, because we have come off a time of a lot of gray being use,” she said. “But (the Feature Colors) also pair fantastically with these warm or neutral colors, like browns and beiges and taupes.”

Shades of white and gray were, for a number of years, predominant choices for neutral colors — which are the principal colors in most modern interiors, as they’re thought to make a space both brighter and seemingly larger, and because they don’t clash with the décor. Put more simply, they’re inoffensive. By the same token, stronger colors tend to be used sparingly.

But, for neutrals, the pendulum has swung away from whites and grays, toward somewhat warmer hues. Diamond Vogel’s suggested color palette to complement Ranch House, for instance, includes two greenish shades, a very warm terracotta color and a beige or cream-ish color, while the Fresh Start palette includes an intense pink-ish shade, two blues and a parchment color.

“Overall I would characterize the color movement right now as warmer,” Agar-Studelska said. “In that, there’s going to be more of your browns, even a little bit more into yellows. But certainly for neutrals, we do see that trend moving away from more stark grays, with a lot more warmth to them. And seeing a lot of the browns and the taupes and beiges being used. And I really think that’s just an extension of us just wanting to find comfort in our homes. And most colors do tend to cycle about every 10, 15 years.”



Above: This interior 4 from Diamond Vogel shows Ranch House, one of its four 2023 Feature Colors, painted on the walls. In its annual Color Trends Report, Diamond Vogel calls Ranch House a “deep brown.” **Left:** A swatch of the paint color Ranch House is shown. Ranch House is one of Diamond Vogel’s four 2023 Feature Colors.



Above: This interior mockup from Diamond Vogel shows Fresh Start, one of its four 2023 Feature Colors, on the cabinets at the left. Diamond Vogel’s annual Color Trends report calls Fresh Start an “upbeat” shade of green. **Left:** A swatch of the paint color Fresh Start is shown. Fresh Start is one of Diamond Vogel’s four 2023 Feature Colors.



Above: This interior mockup from Diamond Vogel shows Calm Interlude, one of its four 2023 Feature Colors, on the wall. Diamond Vogel’s annual Color Trends report describes Calm Interlude as an “ultra-deep blue green.” **Left:** A swatch of the paint color Calm Interlude is shown. Calm Interlude is one of Diamond Vogel’s four 2023 Feature Colors.

HOME *let there be light*



Sierra Whitlock, a lighting consultant at Lessman Lighting Center, 801 West Seventh St., shows off a light fixture she's chosen to go inside the bedroom of anime-loving teenager.

SEEING THE LIGHT!

From classic to contemporary to funky, which chandelier is right for you?

Text by Earl Horlyk | Photographs by Tim Hynds

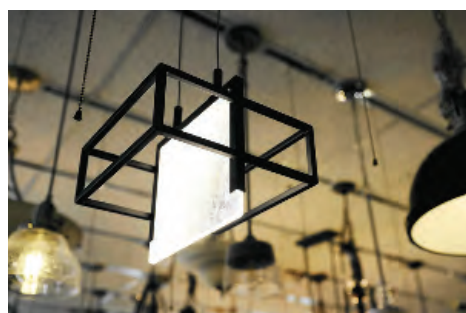
After learning she'd be choosing overhead lighting for the bedroom of an anime-mad teenager, Sierra Whitlock immediately thought of a fixture that was abstract and edgy.

For the couple who wanted lighting for their modern farmhouse, Whitlock chose a light fixture that gave off a rustic vibe without being too country.

As the lighting consultant at Lessman Lighting Center, Whitlock has access to pendants, chandeliers and sconces from hundreds of different manufacturers.

But she gets the feedback by interacting with her clients.

"When clients call, I'll ask if they have a Pinterest board with lighting that



A light fixture is shown at Lessman Lighting Center, 801 West Seventh St.

they like," Whitlock said. "This way, I can do some homework before our initial meeting."

So, what kind of lighting do customers want these days? According to Whitlock, LED lighting.

"Quality LED lights last longer and are more energy-efficient," she said, inside of Lessman's 801 West Seventh St., showroom. "It is also cost-effective."

Certainly, Whitlock is cognizant when it comes to personal finance. That's why she considers new lighting to be a relatively inexpensive way of sprucing up a room.

"Updated fixtures can create drama, warmth and character to any setting," she said. "Unlike buying an entire room of new furniture, lighting won't break the bank."



An LED light fixture is shown at Lessman Lighting Center, 801 West Seventh St.

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Sierra Whitlock, a lighting consultant at Lessman Lighting Center, 801 West Seventh St., talks about styles of light fixtures.

But not all lighting is right for all settings.

"Something ultra-contemporary would look out of place in a Craftsman-style house," Whitlock explained.

"Choosing a vintage-looking chandelier probably wouldn't give off the right vibe in a more contemporary room."

Even what a room is used for plays a role in choosing the right fixture.

"Let's say you have a formal dining room that you only use on special occasions," Whitlock noted. "That may require different lighting than the dining room in my house where my children do their homework every night."

However, it all comes down to personal preference.

"Everybody has a sense of style," Whitlock said. "It's my job to see what that style is and see if I have lighting to match."

Indeed, Lessman's showroom has all variety of lighting from modern to elegant to artistic or, what Whitlock likes to describe as "funky."

"Funky" is lighting that stops you in your track and makes you say "Wow!" she said, showing off a shiny light fixture which looks like an artistic artifact from a discotheque.

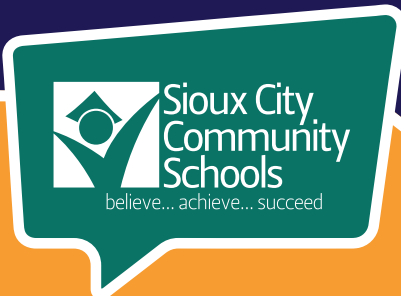
Which is why Whitlock likes lighting so much.

"It doesn't take much to change up a room," she said. "A few, well-chosen fixtures can make it cozy, romantic, dramatic, you name it."

Or in the case of Whitlock's anime-loving, teenaged client, it can make a room "funky."

"Yeah, this is one funky-looking light fixture," she said, admiring the ceiling light she had chosen for the room. "I don't know if it's anime, but it is certainly artistic."

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Nick Gunn, director of food services at Morningside University, demonstrates cooking chicken with different types of oil at the Mustang Grill.

A GUSHER OF OIL IDEAS

*Wondering what oils to cook with?
A Sioux City food expert has you covered*

Text by Jared McNett | Photographs by Jesse Brothers

Sioux City's Nick Gunn has worked with a whole lot of food. In addition to owning McCarthy & Bailey's Irish Pub, where he also served as the chef, Gunn has won awards in state and regional cooking contests, taught culinary classes at Western Iowa Tech Community College and spent the past year as the general manager for Morningside University's food services.



Nick Gunn, director of food services at Morningside University, demonstrates cooking chicken with different types of oil.

As that program's director, Gunn's responsible for overseeing three locations, one of which, the Wikert Dining Hall, serves meals three times a day, Monday through Friday, and two on the weekends. When factoring in the university's "Mustang Grill" and "Spoonholder Cafe" fronts, Morningside sees more than 10,000 food transactions a week. The weekly grocery order for the whole property is about \$20,000 a week, according to Gunn. That includes protein choices, fresh produce, dessert options, beverages, cooking supplies and plenty more.

When it comes to cooking oil, Gunn said Morningside probably does about nine gallons in a week. And that's just canola oil. If you're talking olive oil, the food service staff goes through four-to-five gallons. Specialty oils, such as sesame or coconut, come in when called for in a certain recipe.

"I have a big tank that holds like 1,300

pounds of oil. And next to the fryer, it looks like a gas handle pump, you take it and squeeze it just like you're putting gas in your car," Gunn said.

Point being, Gunn knows a thing or two about cooking oil.

He said canola is the least fussy to cook with because the oil has a high smoke point and doesn't impart a lot of flavor onto what's cooking in it. It's possible to get up to 410 degrees before it starts smoking.

"Olive oil, you're talking 325 degrees," Gunn said.

And though olive oil can't stand the same heat as canola, and has a noticeable taste, Gunn said there aren't many better options when it comes to sauté work at a low or medium heat.

There are some selections, your grapeseed and sunflower seed oils, that, unlike olive oil, have high smoke points and unmistakable tastes, according to Gunn.

"Coconut oil is great if you want to bake. Put that in your cakes. But then you're going to have a little bit of coconut flavor."

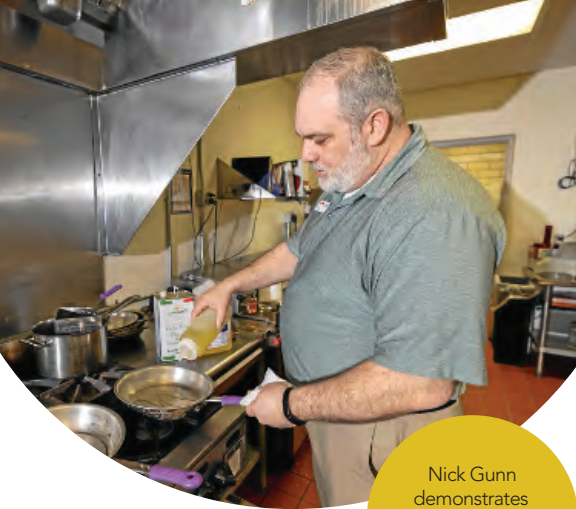
NICK GUNN,
director of food services
at Morningside University



Nick Gunn, director of food services at Morningside University, talks about the different oils they use to cook at Wikert Dining Hall.



Nick Gunn, director of food services at Morningside University.



Nick Gunn demonstrates cooking chicken with different types of oil.

"I don't always want that flavor in my food. I want it to be part of the dish and not the dish," he said. "So if that's not what you want, don't do it. But they're great on salads. I prefer them on cold salads, or as toppings to canapes or something like that. If I'm just finishing a dish off with something like a truffle oil or something like that."

A few other seed oils, Gunn said, can do wonders in a salad dish: Flaxseed, pumpkin seed and sesame seed, which is actually versatile enough to cook with for Asian dishes.

"I learned the hard way with flaxseed oil," Gunn said. "I cooked with it and I ate it and I about threw up all over the place. I got sick and I had to go to the doctor. (He said) 'Well yeah, you shouldn't cook with that.'"

Similar to sesame seed oil, coconut oil works hot or cold, Gunn said.

"Coconut oil is great if you want to bake," he said. "Put that in your cakes. But then you're going to have a little bit of coconut flavor."

He said coconut oil also is relatively healthy and may help with joint inflammation.

It's not alone in terms of potentially offering health benefits.

"There are a lot of health benefits, for your heart, for olive oil," Gunn said.

Regardless of the choice, Gunn said most oils should be OK for cooking in the oven.

"You're not going to roast most things over 350 degrees in your oven. So a lot of those oils, even olive oil, all of those oils are still going to be pretty good for you," he said.

However...

"If you're using the broiler in your oven, that's where you're going to want to pay attention," Gunn added.

One other bit of wisdom Gunn had to offer?

If you don't really know what you're doing with some of those oils, you may need to research a little bit better."

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Mod House Interiors' Lisa Kalaher talks about current styles in home decor.

WHAT'S ON TREND?

Earth tones with pops of color are making an impact in homes

Text by Caitlin Yamada | Photographs by Tim Hynds

Sage green, pastel pink, terracotta, light woods and other Earth tones are all trending in home décor right now.

Moving out of stark, cool-toned minimalism and into colorful maximalism is where design trends are heading, says Lisa Kalaher with Mod House Interiors. But for now, earthy tones are one way homeowners are transitioning their spaces.

Kalaher keeps an eye on home décor trends throughout the year. She says like fashion, trends start in larger cities.

Designers will show off their latest creations, and the public will think, "That is crazy." As time progresses, those trends will be picked up and replicated by other companies, but will still be high-end. These designers will start showing these pieces can be styled in a home, and eventually, they will become common.



Above: A rounded-corner shelving unit is show at Mod House Interiors in Sioux City store. *Right:* Mod House Interiors' Lisa Kalaher gestures toward a textured vase while talking about current styles in home decor.

Kalaher tries to be trend-forward and catch items before they reach the big-box stores.

Right now, Mod House's in-store products feature rounded-corner furniture, uniquely shaped vases, naturally toned décor and a few pops of color here and there. The decorations are warm and unique.

Kalaher said for a while homes were very minimalist in color, mostly gray, black and white. Slowly people started mixing in more neutral tones.

Now, Kalaher said people are incorporating pops of color into the décor. Another change is moving away from sharp-edged furniture into curved, statement pieces.

"When we went gray, we also get really hard, sharp edges so now it's kind of moving softer," she said. "The softer color tones and softer edging."





Mod House Interiors' Lisa Kalaher says neutral colors are back in home decorating.

“When we went gray, we also get really hard, sharp edges so now it’s kind of moving softer. The softer color tones and softer edging.”

LISA KALAHER,
Mod House Interiors

Other popular trends include more uniquely designed items. Mod House has vases of a variety of styles including ones with faces on them, textured finishes, unique shapes, etc.

Kalaher said everyone can achieve this new look. Instead of trying to switch out all of the decorations at once, she recommends slowly switching out items. This is called a slow switch or “slow decorating.”

Simple, affordable switches are changing out throw pillows and blankets, mixing new tones into already existing



Small, textured candleholders are among the trends gaining traction.

furniture. Switching out a rug is also a quick and efficient way to change a space.

“Those elements alone can change so much in your house because you’ve changed the look,” Kalaher said.

If someone wants to be able to keep

up with home design trends but keep the budget low, Kalaher recommends investing in quality, neutral sofas and chairs. Something timeless in a neutral tone can easily transition from trend to trend.



Look for neutral colors accented with pops of color when choosing new home items.

Side tables, lamps, wall art and other small home décor items are all fairly inexpensive to change.

Because Mod House is a small store, with a much larger order-in inventory, Kalaher has to slowly switch out her inventory. Unlike a big-box store, she displays her inventory in a way that people can picture it in their own homes.

“If it can work in this space, it can work in your house,” she said.

If someone is interested in matching their home to new trends but has no idea how to do it, Mod House helps their customers shop based on their taste and lifestyle. Whether it’s looking at a picture of a space in their home and giving advice, creating a vision board, or creating an entire mockup layout online, Kalaher wants to help people design their interiors.

Interior design isn’t easy for everyone, Kalaher said. She said it can be difficult for people to imagine what to change in their own space and know where to look for it. Mod House can help someone determine what works best and shop for them within a specific budget.

Kalaher said she likes to talk to people before they get to the point of frustration and before they buy five different lamps for a space they don’t know how to style.

In the future, Kalaher believes people embracing items they enjoy will become standard practice and maximalism will be the new trend.

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Sara Kleinhesselink, a designer at Hirshfield's Sioux City Paint, Window Treatments and Wall Coverings, laughs while talking about new trends in window shades.

WINNING WINDOWS

New textures, push-button shades and a few blasts from the past make window treatments trendy

Text by Earl Horlyk | Photographs by Tim Hynds



Sara Kleinhesselink operates a large panel-style window shade.

When she was earning her bachelor of fine arts degree, Sara Kleinhesselink learned all about color theory and spatial design.

As the window fashions designer at Hirshfield's Sioux City Paint & Decorating, she is putting her artistic eye to new styles of window treatment.

"Window shades allow a person to control both privacy and the amount of shade inside a room," Kleinhesselink said, inside of Hirshfield's 1625 Hamilton Blvd. showroom. "Some people don't want a hassle, preferring a simple roller shade, while others may prefer a layered shade to keep things bright and let just the right amount of the outdoor light shine through.

"It is my job to accommodate both types of customers," she added.

Indeed, a proper window treatment can help to keep cold weather out during winter while cooling us off during the dog days of summer.

DRESSING UP OR DRESSING DOWN YOUR WINDOWS

Even more than that, shades and blinds can dress up your windows while making rooms look formal and elegant, modern or romantic.

Plus you can completely change the character of a room simply by pushing a button.

“Most of us are familiar with shades that operate by pulling up or down on cord,” Kleinhesselink explained. “Now, you can open and close shades by remote control or with a smartphone. If you’re on vacation, you can control your shades to give the impression somebody is still at home.”

STYLISHLY SHADY

Woven shades are becoming a popular trend, with thick pieces of bamboo providing a natural, back-to-nature look, while grass weave materials create a more delicate, upscale look.

Indeed, some shades are both energy-saving and sustainably made with recyclable material.

While these things may be up-to-date and trendy, other window treatments take a page from the past.

WHAT IS OLD IS NEW AGAIN

“Fashions tend to repeat themselves,” Kleinhesselink said. “Window treatments are the same way.”

For instance, the squiggly pastels that you saw in the 1980s are back and so are the sometimes flamboyant window dressings which would accommodate them.

Before you turn your living room into grandma’s place or, perhaps, Blanche’s house on “The Golden Girls,” remember to design for the way you want to live.

“People will fall in love with something they see in a magazine or online,” Kleinhesselink said. “A few years ago, everybody wanted to paint their walls what I’d call an ‘Instagram-able white.’”

“They thought with a white background, everything else would just pop,” she continued, shaking her head. “Instead, everything looked cold or institution-like.”

TRENDY TREATMENTS THAT’LL TURN HEADS

Which is why window treatments can be an easy fix.

“By switching out a roller shade to a paneled-Roman shade, you will completely change the character of a room,” Kleinhesselink said. “By adding texture to a window treatment or going



Sara Kleinhesselink operates a traditional corded shade while talking about differences in window treatments.



Textured fabrics could be the choice you want for a room, depending on its use and sunlight.

ultra-modern or ultra-retro, you can personalize a space to fit a desired look.”
“There is much variety when it comes to window design,” she added. “It is my job to narrow down those options for something that is perfect for you.”



Above: Breezy Struthers Drake talks about kitchen organization at Modern Kitchen Design. Below: Space-saving drawers and other built-in organization within cabinets are a trend.

SPACE SAVERS

Eliminating kitchen clutter with some innovative shelving

Text by Earl Horlyk | Photographs by Jesse Brothers



Most parties or family get-togethers usually end up in the kitchen.

“They call the kitchen ‘the heart of the home’ for a reason,” Modern Kitchen Design’s Breezy Struthers Drake said. “Everybody will eventually go to the kitchen and stay there.”

Well, everybody and everything will find its way into the busiest room in the house.

This is why people are always asking Struthers Drake for space-saving kitchen solutions.

“For the most part, my clients are looking to eliminate the clutter,” she said, inside of Modern Kitchen Design’s 514 Iowa St. showroom. “You know, trying

to maximize a room that has a limited amount of space.”

Sometimes, a pop of color can give the illusion of space.

Switching natural wood doors or painting it in a warm neutral or elegant jewel tone may break up an otherwise white kitchen.

Or a few ingeniously kitchen hacks can give hard-to-hide appliances a brand new home.

“Sioux City tends to have a lot of older homes and, back in the day, people had smaller kitchens as well as fewer appliances,” Struthers Drake said.

A possible solution for cramped space is creating a Lazy Suzan-style base

“Kitchens used to be the room where we prepare meals. Now, it is the room where we do the majority of our living.”

BREEZY STRUTHERS DRAKE,
Modern Kitchen Design



cabinet that is built into an otherwise blind corner in your kitchen.

“I’ve designed Lazy Susan cabinets featuring pullout spaces for pots, pans, coffeemakers, you name it,” Struthers Drake said. “Out of sight, out of mind.”

Rollout cabinets are also a space-saver.

“Base cabinets usually have lots of space but you have to get down on your knees to reach the back,” Struthers Drake said. “And even then, it is hard to see what’s back there.”

Such shelving is perfect for pots, pans and storage containers.

“People are always losing the lid to a pan or to containers,” Struthers Drake said. “Now, everything will have its own space.”

Tall, narrow rollouts are perfect for skinny cabinets if you need space for spices, sodas and smaller items.

Struthers Drake said a shelf designed strictly for rechargers, complete with a recharging station, will make the electronic-mad member of your family squeal with delight.

This innovation provides a kitchen with its “woo-woo” factor.

“When my clients see that, we go ‘woo-woo, how could we ever live without that?’” Struthers Drake said. “We all need a few ‘woo-woo’ moments.”

This is exactly what people have to come to expect from their kitchens.

“Kitchens used to be the room where we prepare meals,” Struthers Drake said. “Now, it is the room where we do the majority of our living.”

Even better, all of your kitchen appliances won’t be taking up so much space and you’ll be able to find the lid for that pot without too much of a hassle.

“Life is so much better when everything has its own place,” Struthers Drake said.



Various kinds of built-in organization within cabinets are trending.



Above: Breezy Struthers Drake demonstrates a lift door cabinet at her store Modern Kitchen Design.



Left: Built-in cabinets and drawers are shown at Modern Kitchen Design in Sioux City.

HOME time for a bar



Left: Austin Foster, a nationally recognized bartender, displays some of the types spirits that a well-stocked home bar should include. Foster says it isn't important for beginning home bar owners to use expensive liquors, but that understanding drink recipes and flavor balance are keys to success.

So how do you start a home bar? What do you need to buy? How do you learn to make unique and fun drinks?

Austin Foster is a local bartender who is nationally recognized and has been bartending for 20 years, with cocktail bartending being his specialty for 15 years.

He has his own expansive basement home bar, as well as a backyard tiki bar, so The Journal sat down with Foster to ask him for advice on starting a home bar.

WHY DO YOU WANT A HOME BAR?

To start building a home bar, Foster recommends visiting a variety of different bars and determining what they like in those bars. What do they like to drink? What do they like about the setting? If they just like the setting but don't like the alcohol, then maybe a home bar isn't the best fit.

If they do like the alcohol, the next step is to determine what the purpose of the bar is. Is it to entertain guests? Is it for tasting events? Is it just for the homeowners? Is it for both? Do they want to make cocktails or serve whisky?

Foster said the main reason people want home bars is to entertain and create a bar experience at home.

"The purpose of a home bar is to create what you can get when you go to a bar," he said.

WHAT SHOULD BE IN THE BAR?

Once the purpose is determined, the homeowner can figure out what to stock in it. If the home bar is for the homeowner, Foster said they should stock it with items they want to drink. If it is for entertaining guests, then there are a few basics they should get.

Whisky, gin, tequila and vodka are the best liquors to keep on hand for guests, Foster said. The brand or taste of liquors depends on the individual's price point.

Foster then recommends having a modifier of sorts such as spiced or herbal liqueurs, vermouth, bitters, syrups or other mixers.

Foster said these mixers also depend on how the space is being used. If someone is interested in making a variety of unique cocktails, then he or she will need a variety of different modifiers. If someone has specific drinks, say rum and Coke, then just having Coca-Cola on hand is perfect.

BAR 101

Want a home bar? here's where to start

Text by Caitlin Yamada | Photographs by Tim Hynds

Whether you want to entertain friends or make a few drinks for a quiet night in, a bar can be a great addition to your home. But where do you start?

When a home bar is mentioned, many think of the classic basement home bar, with all of the makings of a professional setup. But, for most people, that's not necessary.



Above: Austin Foster pours two ounces of blanco agave tequila while making a margarita in one of the bars in his McCook Lake, South Dakota, home.

Right: Essential barware include shakers, a jigger, a mixing cup, stirring spoon and a strainer.

Other items that are easy to keep on hand are limes, lemons, simple syrup, ginger beer, club soda.

WHAT TOOLS SHOULD YOU HAVE IN A HOME BAR?

The first tool Foster recommends is a good shaker. There are three main types of cocktail shakers: the Boston shaker, the cobbler shaker and the French shaker.

A Boston shaker is what most bartenders use. It typically features a 28-ounce tin and, instead of a lid, either another tin or a pint glass is flipped and placed inside, creating a tightly closed container. A cobbler shaker is most popular among home bars. It has three parts, featuring a tin cup, and a lid with a built-in strainer. The French shaker is in between the two, featuring a tin cup with a lid, but no strainer.

After a shaker, Foster recommends a bar spoon for stirring cocktails, a mixing glass for stirred drinks, a jigger for measuring liquor, and a strainer.





Austin Foster says the key to making a cocktail is to shake until your arms feel like they will fall off and then shake some more.



The spoils of success.

“That is the necessary product, that’s going to get you the ability to make 90 percent of the drinks I make when I’m behind the bar,” Foster said.

For easy cleanup, Foster recommends a bar mat. Making drinks can be messy and spills happen. A bar mat captures all of that liquid and prevents a sticky mess.

So once someone has all the necessary tools, the next step is learning how to make a drink.

HOW DO YOU LEARN TO MAKE DRINKS?

Foster said there are two books he recommends reading.

“The Bar Book: Elements of Cocktail Technique” by Jeffrey Morgenthaler is described as a “technique-driven cocktail and bartender book.” The book shows how a professional bartender does every step in making a cocktail with tips and techniques from bartenders around the country,

according to Morgenthaler’s website.

“It’s a fantastic, just all-purpose guide,” Foster said.

“Meehan’s Bartender Manual” by Jim Meehan is described as “the first book of the modern era to explain the bar industry from the inside out,” according to publisher Penguin Random House. The book covers all of the steps of creating a bar.

Both books include extensive recipes that anyone can try out.

Foster said there is a little studying required starting and making drinks at home, but even just some time on Google can help.

Learning how to make a good drink takes time and practice.

“It’s a journey,” he said.

DO YOU NEED A FANCY BUILT-IN BAR?

Foster said no. A home bar can be a corner of your kitchen counter, a bar cart, or a small cabinet.

“You have a space that is dedicated to the cause,” he said. “The more important thing is to be able to have the tools and be able to clean up.”

If someone does want to build a bar, Foster recommends fitting it to their style, needs and space. There is no right or wrong way to build a home bar.



Austin Foster shakes a margarita made with blanco agave tequila, fresh lime juice, agave nectar and ice.

ADDITIONAL TIPS FROM FOSTER

While chatting with Foster, he gave a few other tips for those new to making drinks. Simple syrup is an ingredient many cocktails call for, but Foster said don't buy it at the store.

Simple syrup is a one-to-one ratio of sugar and water. Put those two ingredients in a bottle and shake until the sugar is dissolved. The mixture is then stable for 30 days.

"You don't need to heat it, you don't need to cook it, you certainly don't need to go out and buy it," he said.

Foster also recommends using fresh products when able. Fresh lemons and limes make all the difference in a cocktail. Bottled juice won't cut it.

Give yourself time to decide what drinks to make and serve when hosting a party and keep the menu small.

"You can make a cocktail," he said, while also offering simpler mixers.

The important part of making drinks at home is enjoying them. If you make something you don't like, throw it and make something else.

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HOME cook-off time



GAS VS. ELECTRIC

Two Sioux City chefs help 'settle' the gas stove vs. electric stove debate

Text by Jared McNett | Photographs by Tim Hynds

In 1834, the first commercially produced gas stove came on the scene. Crafted by British inventor James Sharp, it broke with the millennia-long tradition of cooking with wood or coal and allowed people more precision in their meal-making process.

It would take almost another 60 years before any kind of electric stove appeared. Models, such as the one offered by Thomas Ahearn, the owner of a Canadian electric company, made it possible for someone to cook without having to worry about fumes. However, such machinery wouldn't fully become popular in the United States until rural electrification projects during the FDR administration.

As of 2022, when asked what type of cooktop or range they use, 59% of respondents to a Morning Consult poll said electric while 39% said gas. Three percent said they use induction which utilizes an electromagnetic field. In an early 2023 interview with Bloomberg, Richard Trumka Jr., a U.S. Consumer Product Safety commissioner, raised the possibility of an outright ban on gas stoves which ignited...a debate in American cultural discourse.

To help us try and resolve the electric stove vs. gas stove argument, we talked with two chefs from the culinary arts program at Western Iowa Tech

Community College: Brett McCarthy, the program's coordinator, and Michael Gasaway, an instructor. The program has been operating for more than a decade and teaches students about cooking, baking, business, sanitation, nutrition and more.

WHICH TYPE OF STOVE DO YOU TEND TO NOTICE MORE ENERGY LOSS WITH?

McCarthy: Electric, generally more so. But it depends. If you get a new student, and they jack up the flame, and the flame is lapping around the pan, obviously you can get a lot of energy loss because they haven't quite learned the nuance of adjusting their flame appropriate to what they're cooking. The problem with electric, of course, is that the burner stays hot for a period of time so the adjustment phase from low to high, and high back down to low, takes a lot longer.

Opposite page: Chef Brett McCarthy, culinary arts program coordinator, is shown at a commercial gas stove during at Western Iowa Tech Community College. McCarthy said that cooking with electricity or gas each have their strengths and weaknesses.



WHAT WOULD BE THE ADVANTAGE OF ELECTRIC OVER GAS THEN?

McCarthy: It was the cheapest way to go. Not only from a standpoint of the energy that it used, but also its installation and its basic components. It's relatively simple versus a gas appliance. You have different features, that aren't necessarily safety features, that are redundant within a gas appliance that you wouldn't have to necessarily have in an electric appliance.

Gasaway: Electric ranges are, in general terms, a more even cooking surface...Gas, the energy is expelled pretty quickly, and it doesn't necessarily

transfer as effectively as electric.

ARE THERE PARTICULAR TYPES OF COOKING THAT MAKE MORE SENSE WITH AN ELECTRIC STOVE?

Gasaway: The most simplest thing in the world like, you know, a grilled cheese, I'd rather do that on our electric range than gas because gas is so immediate, that you have no time to course correct... It has a little bit more forgiveness than, than the immediacy of gas.

McCarthy: Something where you need really intense heat really quick. I got a little cast iron grill to put on top of my electric stovetop and it gives me the effect

of a gas grill and works really nice. It does some nice searing and charring.

WHAT DOES GAS OFFER THAT ELECTRIC DOESN'T?

McCarthy: You got instant on, instant off, and you got a much larger range of different temperature settings because you can set that gas really low if you're just simmering or you can jack it up if you want to do something you want to heat up much faster...Gas is just a little more versatile. It's easier to control.

Gasaway: When you try to reach a high range of heat with an electric range it takes a long time and it doesn't hold consistently at that high range where gas will do that all day long... When you need to stop at that delicate moment with that delicate butter sauce, it's immediate. You can turn off the heat and the iron below cools down very quickly.

WHEN ARE YOU GOING WITH A GAS STOVE FOR A MEAL?

Gasaway: Something as simple as vegetables or fried rice for a starch or any chicken marsala, there's a real benefit to using gas for the immediate on, immediate off, of the heat.



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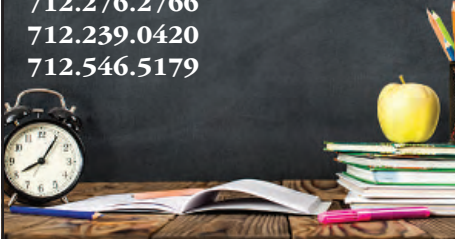
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DO YOU SEE ANY DRAWBACKS TO USING A GAS STOVE INSTEAD OF AN ELECTRIC STOVE?

McCarthy: Well, now carbon-based fuels are becoming more expensive and so I think the cost of gas is probably its main drawback. I think, especially for an electric stove that has a sealed burner, it's sometimes a little bit easier to clean a sealed burner than it would a gas burner...also its installation. You have to have a gas line and it's got to be put in by a licensed plumber. There's all that cost involved too.

WHERE DO YOU COME DOWN THEN, GAS OR ELECTRIC?

McCarthy: I think if they were to create a diagram, gas is more efficient than electric. It's more versatile than electric. At the same time, electric is cheaper to install. In some ways, electric is safer, with the exception that obviously the burner stays hot.

Gasaway: A lot of times when we talk about the advantages of one or the other, we're talking about the range but in an oven, if we're doing something like a high-heat roast, where you're going to you need to generate an intensity of heat for a short period of time and then turn it down to a lower temp and let it go for a while, there's nothing like there's nothing like gas for that.

“I think if they were to create a diagram, gas is more efficient than electric. It's more versatile than electric. At the same time, electric is cheaper to install.”

BRETT MCCARTHY,
*Western Iowa Tech Community College's
program's coordinator*

Above: Chef Brett McCarthy, culinary arts program coordinator, gestures toward a flame on commercial gas stove during an interview. McCarthy said that cooking with electricity or gas each have their strengths and weaknesses.



Stephanie Vostad, design and customer experience lead at Kelly Construction, talks about fixtures in a kitchen while standing underneath a pair of pendant lights at a new home in Sioux City's Whispering Creek neighborhood.

BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

*Modern and farmhouse looks
marry in personal style*

Text by Dolly A. Butz | Photographs by Tim Hynds

When it comes to selecting the finishes for a new home, Stephanie Vostad said you should go with what brings you joy or makes you feel good, not necessarily what's trending.

"Sometimes, you might want to scale back a little bit. If you love navy blue, you might not want to do the whole navy blue kitchen. Maybe do the island, so it's not a full-on commitment," said Vostad, design & client experience manager for Kelly Construction.

When clients purchase a new build from Kelly Construction that hasn't yet been completed, they have a "day with the designer." Vostad meets with them to help pick out the home's finishes. She said the meeting generally takes about four hours.

She said some people know exactly what they want, while others are unsure. Vostad asks them, "How do you want your home to feel?"



Stephanie Vostad, design and customer experience lead at Kelly Construction, talks about the fireplace and light wood floors in a living room space at a new home in Sioux City's Whispering Creek neighborhood. Vostad follows and advises customers in the emerging trends in home design and decorating.

"Some people are very casual. They just want it to be comfortable and functional. Some people are more formal. They just want it to just look how they want it to look. They're not necessarily as worried about the function of the home," she said. "If they can give me some direction on that, that's huge."

Vostad said the two most popular design trends are modern and farmhouse.

"A lot of people like aspects of both of them. They might not necessarily want the full farmhouse look, but they don't necessarily want the full modern look. When you take the two and kind of combine them, it's honestly like the best of both worlds," she said.

Farmhouse, Vostad said, is more classic and cozy. It has a "lived-in" feel. She said modern features clean lines. It can feel more stark.

WARMTH IS BACK

Whites and grays have dominated kitchens recently, but warm tones are making a comeback, according to Vostad.

White painted kitchen cabinetry is predominant in a Kelly Construction home in Sioux City's Whispering Creek neighborhood, at 6250 Tiger Drive. But, the kitchen has a coffee bar with white oak cabinets and shelving. The island has white oak supports, which add some additional warmth to the space.

"One thing that is very much trending,



Stephanie Vostad, design and customer experience lead at Kelly Construction, is framed by a kitchen faucet at a new home in Sioux City's Whispering Creek neighborhood.

right now, is mixing. Not having everything exactly the same. You've got the painted, but, then, you have the wood accents to just kind of mix it up a little bit," Vostad said.

QUARTZ IS STILL KING

Most new homebuyers are choosing quartz countertops, according to Vostad.

"People go with a lighter color," she said. "But we are starting to see some of the really dark colors."

Vostad said more clients are opting for a honed look, rather than polished, when it comes to countertops.

"A leather look is something people are starting to do more of," she said.

LIGHTING CHANGES

Vostad said lighting options have "drastically changed."

"We went from gold to satin nickel and oil-rubbed bronze. Now, those are kind of going by the wayside," she said. "It's actually even getting hard to find oil-rubbed bronze and satin nickel fixtures, now."

Vostad said the majority of lighting features black or gold finishes. And, it's OK to mix the two.

"A lot of people are doing a blend of those," she said. "A lot of people really like that. They just don't want to totally commit to the gold, but it kind of intrigues them. It's kind of the perfect thing."



Painted kitchen cabinetry with white oak shelves are shown at a new Kelly Construction home in Sioux City's Whispering Creek neighborhood.



Painted kitchen cabinetry with white oak countertop supports are shown at a new home in Sioux City's Whispering Creek neighborhood.



Stained cabinetry is shown in a bathroom at a new home in Sioux City's Whispering Creek neighborhood.



A light fixture hangs in an entryway at a Kelly Construction home in Sioux City's Whispering Creek neighborhood.



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DON'T LOSE SIGHT OF THOSE IMPORTANT FRIENDS

I learned a big lesson recently about staying in touch with friends.

I was searching for a story on the internet and, by accident, came across an obituary about a friend from my past. It told how he had written thousands of stories and, ironically, was working on one more when he had died.

He was 83.

I knew him when I was in my 20s, just getting my feet wet, and he was already a grizzled veteran. But he was also very welcoming. He and his best friend, Joan. She was a bit older and they took me under their wing on movie and TV junkets.

The three of us were put together in a room to interview someone from a TV show – that's the unmemorable part – and we started talking while we were waiting. "I'm Mal," he said. "It's French for bad." He introduced Joan and, between drags on a cigarette, she smiled.

The two shared my sense of humor – even though Joan was from New York, Mal was from Virginia and I was from Iowa. We had nothing in common and everything in common. That night, we sat together at a dinner (again, I don't remember what it was for), and when it was over, Mal announced that he had found a show that began at 10:30 and, if we hurried, we could make it.

A show? After a long day and dinner? Who does this?

We, apparently, did. We hustled into a cab and went to some obscure apartment in New York where we saw a musical about John Wayne Bobbitt. (Look it up.) It was so bad, we got the giggles and a friendship was born.

Because we were constantly traveling on weekends to cover movie openings, TV premieres and theme parks, we saw a lot of each other. We wouldn't talk between trips but the minute we got together everything fell into place.

A cab we took to the ballet in San Francisco got a flat tire and we were running late. "Keep driving. You've still got rims," Mal said. And, yes, we made it and, no, I don't know if Romeo or Juliet died because I was too rattled to care.

Joan hated credit cards and only carried money. Rolled into a wad (the kind you see in movies), it was a series of small and large bills that I was sure would attract

attention from someone. Joan, though, had such a "don't mess with me" air no one ever blinked. Even Don Rickles was scared. When we interviewed him, he looked at me and said, "I bet Ma Barker has a gun under the table." She just lit another cigarette and ignored him.

Mal was much more engaging. He loved to tell stories about close encounters with old stars. I was skeptical but, one night, he took us backstage to meet Eartha Kitt and, sure enough, she acted like he was a relative.

Mal and Joan were like salt and pepper, spicing my life with those "Auntie Mame" experiences that few ever get. They made sure I got into Broadway shows that were sold out. They introduced me to the world of entertainment as they knew it and never asked for anything in return.

Somewhere before the turn of the century, Joan retired and pulled away from everything she once held dear. Mal kept plowing away, writing stories day and night.

He called me when she died and filled me in on the details. He said they remembered those excursions we took (yup, to hot New York nightclubs in the 1980s, to the Olympics in the 1990s, to sets of some of the biggest films made) and the laughs and fights we had.

He also recalled the opening of a Broadway musical that was just dreadful. The producer was a friend of Joan's and she came and sat with us at the after-party. What did you think?, the producer asked. In one of those rare moments of charity, Joan gushed.

I couldn't believe it.

When the producer looked at me, I opened up and said it was probably the worst show I'd seen. She looked at Joan, then turned me to me. "I agree," she said. "This thing will close soon."

Joan backtracked, but I realized then I had found my own voice and didn't need to defer. Joan and Mal realized that, too, and our relationship changed. We were still friends, but on

equal footing.

We had many more adventures after that and memories that constantly survive.

Now, though, I realize they didn't have to go out of their way for someone else, but they did. They gave me a window onto a world I hadn't known. And they taught me to always be open to meeting others.

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