

# AND YOU THOUGHT A SINK WAS JUST A SINK!

By Carol Lamkins, CID, CMKBD

The kitchen sink is the pivotal point in designing the work flow of a kitchen. Making a dual statement in function and aesthetics, it is the most frequented location in the kitchen. The popular trend is a main multitask, large single bowl, stainless steel sink. If the preference is a double bowl, then one side is larger and deeper than the other. The sink portion usually installs into a 36-inch wide or less sink base cabinet. However a corner sink may offer a unique design solution.



Courtesy of Rohl - Allia Fireclay Single Sink



Courtesy of Elkay - Top Mount Corner Sink

Larger-sized bowl permits soaking and washing baking sheets and broiler pans. The shape and size of the bowls should accommodate plate diameters and cookware. Bowl depths are usually 8" to 12" with 10" being the most requested. Also all corners of the sinks should be at a slight radius for ease of maintenance.

Multi-task sinks are fitted with "custom" accessories that make the sink work. Included are sliding wood cutting boards or sanitary glass prep boards. Convenience is extended with fitted colanders, overlay sink basin, single and/or second level, adjustable draining racks or with large plastic utility bowls suspended in the sink that create an additional basin complete with drain.



Courtesy of Kohler - Executive Chef



Courtesy of Franke - Drain Tray



Courtesy of Elkay – Sink Colander

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Built-in countertop waste and utility bins are well-suited for composting or collecting when a waste disposal is not part of the system. These stainless steel bins are removable using handles and easy to wash. Keep in mind that the sink best serves the user as a system.



**Cutting Board**  
Tempered Glass



Included

**Three Bowls**  
Polished Stainless  
(Prep, Colander & Measuring)



Included

**Pop-Up  
Strainer**

Included

Courtesy of Franke - Single Bowl with Waste Bin



Courtesy of Franke - Mythos Sliding Prep Board



Courtesy of Franke - Suspended Prep Bowl Insert



Courtesy of Elkay – Inspiration Undermount Sink

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Supporting the “form follows function” model, space is extended with built-in drain boards, usually overlaying the dishwasher. A new concept in sinks is the unique “work bench” that functions as a partition between bowls. The “work bench” supports heavy pots and pans at a comfortable height without the concern of tipping over.



Courtesy of Elkay – Avado Work Bench Sink

Restaurant-style high-neck faucets and pull-out faucet heads maximize a sink’s utility for both food preparation and clean-up. Deck-mounted pop-up strainers make it easy to drain the sink.

A second sink may be added to facilitate entertainment or service an island or wide peninsula. These sinks make a design statement in shape and material. They also come with accessories.

If the island is an important food preparation area, then consider a trough sink. One of these long, gentle sloped troughs incorporate an automatic rinse down of small food refuse and waste disposal action with a touch of a button.



Courtesy of Kohler - Crevasse prep sink

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Whatever the sink combination, most consumers prefer undercounter or tile-in installations versus self-rimming. They also prefer the drain locations offset at the back of the sink for a gentler bottom slope. This helps avoid tipping over standing glasses and covering the drain when stacking plates for scraping or rinsing. The offset location is important for waste disposal installation as the kitchen faucet is usually centered at the back of the sink.



Courtesy of Blanco - Diamond Silgranit Sink

The farmhouse sink is still in demand and is available in a multitude of styles and materials. Materials range from stainless steel to stone to fireclay. Farmhouse sinks, also known as Belgium sinks or country sinks, take us back to an era of well-being and complement the theme of many interiors. Most are single bowls, but some double bowls are available.



Courtesy of Kohler - Alcott Tidings



Courtesy of Whitehaus - Quatro Alcove



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The sink material determines design integration, durability and ease of cleaning. Here are some advantages and disadvantages of some popular materials.

**Enameled cast iron** has been a standard for decades. It is formed by pouring liquid iron into a mold that is cooled, coated with enamel and fired in a kiln. This material is tough and impact-resistant resulting in durability. Enameled cast iron comes in a wide range of high-gloss, rich colors. On the down side it is heavy and large sinks may require extra support in the cabinetry. Cast iron conducts heat which cools dish water. It is susceptible to chipping with impact or with scalding water. There are limited sizes and shapes. Pricing is mid to high end and installation costs can be high.

The revived interest in gourmet cooking and the status of the commercial chef has driven consumer demand to **stainless steel sinks** and appliances. A quality stainless steel sink is an investment. Preferred sink quality is 18-gauge as the thinner gauges such as 20 will dent easily. Higher nickel content increases the corrosion and stain resistance and improves the appearance. Chipping is not an issue. Better stainless steel sinks are coated with a sound deadening material that also works against condensation. With a brushed finished, the sink is less likely to show scratches, be easy to care for and will handle abrasives.

Other popular metals for sinks include **copper, nickel, pewter and brass**. The finishes are usually polished but these sinks may also be available in matte and hammered finishes. Beautiful, but requiring special care, the choice of these metals is usually intended for an entertainment sink with limited use. These sinks may be subject to tarnish without a protective finish. Maintenance involves rinsing and drying after use to avoid water spotting. It is important to refer to the manufacturer's instructions before using any type of polish. These more exotic metal sinks are usually on the high end of cost.

**Fire-clay**, one of the hardest ceramics, dates back to the 1800's and is resurging in popularity. This material offers a smooth, non-porous surface that will not rust, fade or discolor. The hard, durable surface offers excellent resistance to commonly used chemicals and detergents. It is chip, thermo-shock and stain resistant. Cleaning can range from mild soap and warm water to using an abrasive pad with any general purpose cleanser. Undermount kits make installation easy. This is an investment sink with great returns.

Homogeneous **solid surface** sinks have the advantage of integral installation for the clean, easy-to-maintain look. They are resistant to stains and household chemicals and are repairable. These sinks are typically installed in solid surface countertops using liquid solid surface compounds for seamless installation. Abrasive and bleach-based cleansers are not a problem for acrylic or polyester versions. However, acrylic-based solid surface can handle higher temperatures and is more resistance to impact. Cost is always a factor in the decision.

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Hi-tech **quartz crystal** sinks, bound with acrylic, have been on the market for some time. Each manufacturer formulates proprietary materials in their composite to achieve durability and color-through consistency. These sinks are heat and scratch resistant. An advantage is the up-scaled look and the wide range of available colors. Costs are usually on the high side.

The vast array of sink choices is overwhelming. A sink selection should meet the consumer's expectations in beauty, function and maintenance. Knowledge of performance, styles and accessories is the first step towards maximum satisfaction. The bottom line is that the sink and system should serve all of the needs of the consumer.