

# What's **HOT** in the Kitchen?

From video monitoring to rippling tiles, the home's heart throbs with innovation

By Katherine Beeson

**E**ver since the “cocooning” movement of the 1990s, families have tended to spend more time at home. And because the kitchen is the heart of that home, many of today's houses boast open-concept kitchens so cooks can share in the activities of the adjoining living areas while preparing daily meals or food for entertaining. The kitchen has become the ultimate live-in area with meal preparation as the unifying concept, so it is no surprise that kitchens are leading the way in high-tech innovations and additions.

## Room with Views

While family members are busy in the kitchen, they also want to be sure that children, spouses or friends are safe in other areas of the property. Sean Jacobs, owner of JP Kitchen Design in Oconomowoc, has a great solution – visual monitoring.

“Video monitoring is a great way to keep visual tabs on other rooms in the house, the backyard – even the boathouse or the shoreline,” Jacobs says. “This emerging trend works on a traditional television screen, a flat screen LCD type or an upper cabinet tilt-down. You could be watching the news, and all you have to do is flip the channel. The monitoring has four images per second with a rotation every two seconds. You can also build

in an intercom inside the house or boathouse.”

## Speaker Easy

A little high-tech preplanning when building or remodeling can yield spectacular results. “Speakers placed behind the drywall, buried into the walls, deliver a whole home audio system,” Jacobs says. “When you think of the expense of nice paint and then of placing ugly speakers in front of them – these speakers could be placed almost anywhere in the ceiling or walls.” Jacobs enjoys the challenges that high-tech kitchens bring to his designing jobs. “We get to retrofit today's technology into a 50-year-old home,” he says.

## Bright Ideas

Let there be light – and make it energy efficient! Solatubes – reflective tubes installed between rafters – capture sunlight (or moonlight, for that matter) and redirect this light into interior spaces. “Solatubes cut energy by using the natural light of the sun or moon and amplify it,” says Nick Kerzner, co-owner of Kerzner Remodeling and Construction in Oconomowoc. “Moonlight is a great natural night light, but the Solatube also uses baffles to dim the light when complete



**Solatubes reflect the sun's rays into the kitchen for soft, natural light that saves on energy costs.**

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