



Design Firm Puts Cooking Back in the Kitchen



Cook-friendly designs with ample prep space and top-of-the-line appliances are the specialty at Le Gourmet Kitchen.

The showroom, located in the historic district of Old Town Orange, not only shows off a variety of kitchens ranging in style from Tuscan to Asian, but also now allows clients to sign up with a gourmet cooking school, located conveniently right on premises.

“Most of our clients are Baby Boomers who like to entertain and like to spend time in their homes,” says Colucci. “Most have taken the time to do their research and are educated about what they want. They want [to hire] someone with sophisticated taste, a good design concept and creativity, as well as someone who will take the project from beginning to end.”

Colucci, a CKD, has loved cooking himself for more than two decades, and sees the kitchen as a sort of studio: “A kitchen is like a painting. I’m the artist; the kitchen to be designed a blank canvas. With the ideal blend of client collaboration, creative inspiration and a balance of elements, a functional art piece can be created.”

“Form and function must work together like the spices in a fine pasta sauce,” he says, “smooth and pleasing, with just the right hint of boldness.”

DIVERSE EXPERIENCE

The two principals at Le Gourmet Kitchen bring a wealth – and a wide diversity – of experience to the business. This helps to give them a unique creative vision while focusing heavily on real-life use – something too many kitchen designers forget.

Colucci first studied architecture

by Joe Dowd

ORANGE, CA—

Imagine that you’re a client, wanting a brand new, state-of-the-art kitchen – except you don’t have a clue how to cook fine cuisine. Then, imagine your kitchen and cooking problems solved, all by visiting one showroom.

This is the unique concept behind Le Gourmet Kitchen, Ltd., a firm that designs clients’ dream kitchens, and then hooks them up with an on-sight cooking school so they can fully appreciate that investment.

Talk about your one-stop shopping.

“Our clients can come in and see the latest design trends and fashions,” says Bruce Colucci, the co-owner of Le Gourmet Kitchen. “But we’re not only cutting edge in design, flooring, top-of-the-line appliances and lighting, we’ll even teach them how to cook.”

The company has been in business since 1992, specializing in luxury kitchen and bath design.



Le Gourmet Kitchen showcases a wide variety of styles for its Baby Boomer clientele, from ultra-modern to warm traditional, Asian-inspired to Tuscan. The firm also focuses on careful lighting design to maximize designs’ visual impact and functional appeal.

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in New York, worked on design projects in Europe and spent several years at the renowned Pacific Design Center and as the manager of the Poggenpohl Beverly Hills showroom. He also served the National Kitchen & Bath Association as a v.p. of programs for the Southern California Chapter. And, of course, he is a home chef who teaches weekly cooking classes to teenagers in his free time.

His partner, Jonathan Salmon, CKD, CBD, CID, brings more than 20 years' experience of kitchen design and extensive world travel to his work. The cultures, geographies and design elements from other countries he's experienced offer a rich resource of ideas, according to Salmon, who is a native of South Africa.

"I want to ensure that a kitchen fits the clients' very personal lifestyle, and reflects their personality," says Salmon. "The most important design aspect is how the kitchen works for the homeowner."

The business partners consider their technical expertise to be as important as their cooking skills. Colucci has been involved in cabinet making and woodshop arts for years; Salmon worked with metal and lathes before he attended

architecture school.

Clearly, the affluent communities of Orange County are a driving force behind their business. The design team works routinely in homes ranging from \$500,000 to \$1 million or more, performing everything from small kitchen remodels to larger-scale construction projects.

There is also a segment of the company's clientele who are somewhat less affluent but who are tapping into the equity in their homes to make improvements. "These are people who are now able to afford a kitchen that, before this, they were only able to dream about," says Colucci, who adds that his products and services can be adjusted to reflect the needs of different homes in his service area.

"We're not just selling kitchen environments," Colucci says. "We want to give our clients a unique living environment."

But always, Colucci and Salmon keep the cooking in mind when designing kitchen projects. They work with clients with the cooking, not merely the aesthetics, in mind.

And then came the brainstorm to include a cooking school in their showroom. Le Gourmet Kitchen opened a partnership last September with a branch of the famed Laguna Culinary Arts schools, one of the most prestigious schools in Southern California. Clients have the option, for a separate fee, to take classes right in the showroom, using one of Le Gourmet Kitchen's working showroom spaces as a "classroom."

"This is what separates us from the rest, a cooking school on premises," says Colucci. "We have a hands-on cooking school where our clients can use our facilities to learn great cooking, and then use our dining room to try out their creations."

The kitchen that serves as a classroom is one of four functional kitchens at the firm's 4,300-sq.-ft. showroom. The other three working kitchens, by Miele, Sub-Zero and Dacor, provide clients with a cross section of ideas and trends, showing customers myriad design possibilities.

Using such product lines as Wood-Mode, Dacor, CaesarStone, Wolf, Sub-Zero, Hafele and others, the firm performs a variety of design functions and subcontracts the installation out to local firms that the company is closely affiliated with, says Colucci.

The company markets itself



While kitchens designed by Le Gourmet Kitchen focus on creative and visually stunning design, the spaces are also geared specifically for cooking, with the impact on the cook taken into careful consideration as part of the design process.

mostly through word-of-mouth and the Internet, although Salmon notes that he is considering increasing the firm's presence in local newspapers and on radio.

"Essentially, our philosophy is

a wholistic approach to kitchens, from beginning to end, from the perspective of the impact on the family and the impact on the cook," says Salmon. "We create kitchens that sizzle."

Le Gourmet Kitchen, Ltd.

AT A GLANCE

Location: Orange, CA

Principals: Bruce Colucci, CKD; Jonathan Salmon, CKD, CBD, CID

Showroom: One, 4,300 square feet, including the cooking school.

Hours of Operation: Monday-Friday, 9 a.m. - 5 p.m., Saturday 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Number of Employees: Eight, including the two principals.

Major Product Lines Carried: Wood-Mode, ArtCraft Kitchens, Hafele, Dacor, Sub-Zero, Wolf, CaesarStone, Bentwood Kitchens.

Specialties: High-end custom kitchen design with an option of learning to cook.

Design Software: Includes 20-20 and AutoCad.

Business Philosophy: "We take a wholistic approach to kitchens, from beginning to end, working from the perspective of the impact on the family and the impact on the cook."

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