

Today's look: traditional with a twist



Kitchen by Paradigm, above; Merit kitchen, top right, stainless steel commercial-style stove, right; and two looks in contemporary dishwashers, below and opposite page.



By LESLIE PETERSON

Talking food? Refrigerated ranges? Cooking at the speed of light? All here, with the exception of the first item, which we're told lies just around the corner. Yet hand-in-hand with these high-tech advances, a paradox, designers looking back to the past as they sail into the future. Traditional with a twist.

Stainless steel, the commercial, industrial look, was common a few decades ago; today it's ubiquitous, from sinks, appliances and range hoods to open shelving and backsplashes. Circular and

oval-shaped windows, popular in the early part of the 20th century, have been resurrected.

Still, there's no stopping progress and the revolution in kitchen technology proceeds at a breakneck pace. Picture, if you will, a hybrid refrigerator/oven. Whirlpool's Polaris cools or cooks, as commanded. Just pre-program it, or dial in from your office or car, giving instructions to cook your chicken or roast at a specific time, keep it warm, or revert back to a fridge if you're delayed. Available in Canada in December.

Even now, systems are being developed for refrigerators in which rotating sections ensure that desired foods are available through small openings that respond to voice recognition.

According to Ron Strich, former vice-president of marketing for British technology firm ICL, packaging intelligence is almost here. "When I am low on milk, the milk carton itself will announce that I am almost empty and add itself to the shopping list."

Clever utilization of space and energy are prime concerns, addressed in part by Thermador's Combination Oven, three-in-one: convection, radiant and microwave. An exciting newcomer, General Electric's Advantium line cooks with the speed of light - halogen light, that is - up to eight times as fast as conventional ovens, or converts to microwave. Another innovative system will capture residual heat from ovens and ventilating systems into a supplementary energy dispenser.



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