

# kitchen & bath DESIGN NEWS®

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# Spa-Style Bath Trends

Spa-style master bathrooms continue to dominate design, providing a place where consumers can alleviate the stresses associated with today's busy lifestyle.

BY KIM BERNDTSON

Master bathrooms can be traditional or contemporary in style, spacious or petite in size and everything in between. But a common denominator of many is that they feel like a luxurious spa.

In fact, for many designers, including Trudy Voigt, descriptions like 'oasis,' 'retreat' and 'escape' are often the first words they hear when clients discuss the environment they want for their master bathrooms.

"We don't really do any master bath projects that aren't relaxing or spa-like," says the kitchen/bath designer at Tribute Kitchen & Bath, in Plano, TX. "Whether it's a busy mother

with three kids, a professional entrepreneur or anyone in between, everyone wants to be able to close the door and take a deep breath."

"Given today's fast-paced world, where work and home life demands can be overwhelming, our clients continue to desire a personal, private space where they can relax and find respite," agrees Emily Castle, ASID, Castle Design, in Clayton, MO. "For that reason, spa-style baths are as popular as ever."

"People want more specialized bathrooms," adds Kathy Lyle, principal designer, Interior Trends Remodel & Design. She and Kathy Nieto, principal builder, own the Tucson,



Emily Castle planned this bath to be a calm, Zen-like oasis for the homeowners. Clean lines and contemporary fixtures combine with warm custom cabinetry, while spa-style elements include a heated towel rack, calming abstract artwork and artistic blue glass vessel sinks as well as the focal-point soaking tub that sits atop a raised platform.

Talli Allen-Roberts created a spa-like environment in this master bath with wave-like, hand-carved limestone tile behind the focal-point freestanding tub. She further enhanced the atmosphere by adding a shelf and a linear fireplace.

AZ-based design/build firm. “Whether they are waking up or winding down, they are seeking multiple spa-like elements in a calming, soothing environment where they can melt away stress in a place where time almost stands still.”

While everyone seems to want a spa-style bath, defining it can admittedly be a moving target. It can also be dependent on where someone lives. For example, spa-style baths designed by Davida Rodriguez, CKD, have ranged from baths with white/gray finishes and cool marble to those with warmer earth tones and pebbles. “It’s really a matter of personal taste,” says the designer at Davida’s Kitchen & Tiles, in Gaithersburg, MD.

Jim Meloy, CKD, Kitchen & Bath Concepts, in Roswell, GA, agrees. “Every client is different,” he says. “Some want the wood look, others paint. We see a lot of white and dark paints, but every job is different.”

For Nicole Raffensperger, interior designer, Design Tech Remodeling, in Mequon, WI, her midwestern clients are looking for spa-style design that is warm and inviting to help combat cold winters. “It’s really all about what someone considers to be spa-like,” she says. “What works for one person may not work for another.”

## NEW FEATURES

Even with a relatively loose definition, designers have become well versed in the spa-style bath since it’s been at the forefront of design for a number of years. Given its longevity, designers are seeing some changes in how clients express that spa style.

“Over the years, the style is changing to feature a minimalist, sophisticated feel,” says Castle. “Clean lines, modern lighting and lux products are paired with natural finishes to create a calm and contemporary design.”

“Design style is always changing and we are continually innovating,” adds Lyle. “For example, in recent years we have been doing more all-inclusive wet rooms, combining numerous amenities such as a tub, shower, bench and steam features all within the same room. It lends itself to a true, five-star, spa-like environment.”

Angie Gardeck, owner/principal, New Perspective Design, in Algonquin, IL, is also seeing a trend toward wet rooms where tubs and showers share space behind glass. In one recent project, it proved to be the perfect solution by making better use of the space while allowing for both a freestanding tub and a large, walk-in shower.

“Without the wet room, we were extending the shower further into the room and placing the tub in front,” she says. “By integrating the tub with the shower, we didn’t need the same clearances as we would if each was on its own. It was a great way to create a big walk-in shower and open up the space.”

Gardeck indicates wet rooms can also maintain a warmer environment for clients who like to take baths since the tub is located in an enclosed area. “I think tubs will start to make a comeback, albeit in a different form,” she says, noting a preference for freestanding models. “We’ve put tubs into our last two projects. Previously, there had been a focus on making



Photo: David Dietrich

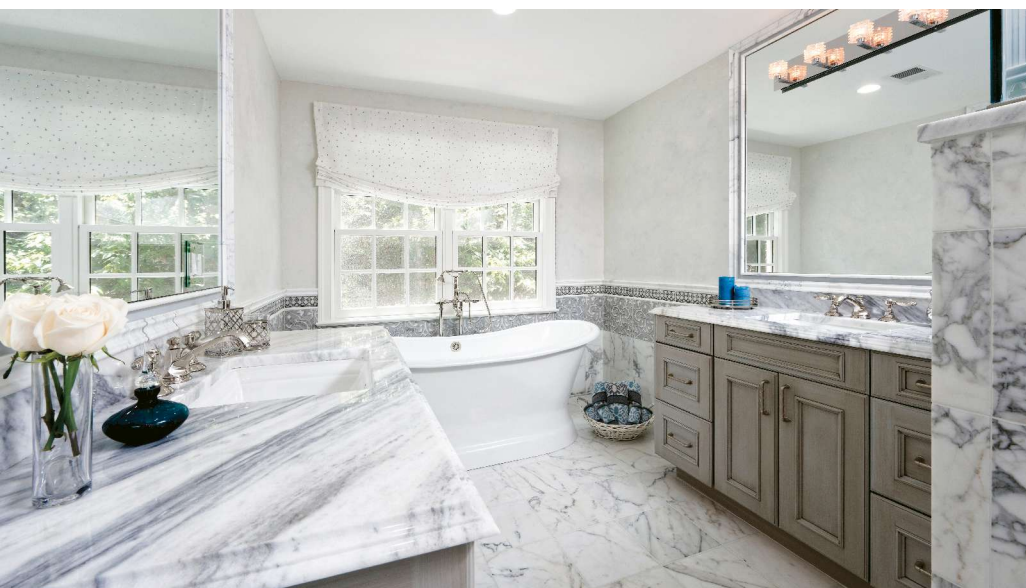


This master bath designed by Angie Gardeck in collaboration with Overstreet Builders showcases several trending features, including wet rooms and finishes with warmer tones. The vertical column of iridescent mosaic tile adds warmth against the cooler striated porcelain tile and mimics the verticality of the cabinet towers on the opposite side of the room.





Photos: Bob Nirod



✎ The cool, crisp tones of this master bath, designed by Davida Rodriguez, are popular with many of the designer's clients, as is the more open floor plan, where closets are often incorporated into the master bathroom.

she says, adding that she likes to incorporate a ledge, shelf or table for candles or a glass of wine to create an inviting, luxurious experience. "Air baths are popular, too, because the holes are small and those tubs are much easier to keep clean compared to old styles with huge jets that would tend to clog."

Castle agrees, noting deep soaking air tubs with gentle massaging bubbles are popular, as are steam showers. "It's important to incorporate fixtures that help homeowners relax and feel rejuvenated," she says. "High-end fixtures, and technology, can make a homeowner's bath feel like a spa at a destination five-star hotel. It's really all about finding personalized therapeutic ways to relax in your own home."

For Lyle, there are advantages to undermounted tubs. "Undermounted tubs, and sinks, with solid surfaces provide minimal maintenance and multi-function," she maintains. "They allow a solid surface top to serve as a bench, with easy access to sit and turn for accessibility, and safety when wet."

Conversely, clients of Meloy and Voigt often opt for large showers in lieu of a tub of any style.

"One of the main requests today is for an expansive shower," says Voigt. "Most times that involves removing an old garden-style tub."

"We just aren't seeing tubs much anymore," adds Meloy. "Clients often replace it with a bench that offers a place to sit and dress, as well as [a place] for storage."

Rodriguez sees master bathrooms becoming part of an open floor plan where they are combined with dressing rooms,

the shower as large as possible. But I think there's a bit of correction going on now as far as scale. We are starting to see smaller showers that are more balanced, putting a focus back on the tub."

The tub-versus-shower debate continues to be a common discussion point. Raffensperger still sees tubs being removed in favor of walk-in showers. But when space can accommodate both, her clients trend more toward a freestanding version. "People like the look of a freestanding tub," she says. "It's more contemporary and feels more spa-like."

Talli Allen-Roberts, ASID, principal/interior designer, Allard + Roberts Interior Design, in Asheville, NC, echoes the preference for freestanding models. "We have been specifying a lot of freestanding bathtubs with floor-mounted tub fillers,"