

KITCHEN AND BATH PRODUCTS AT EVERY PRICE

Stretch your budget and still get the style you want. Let these experts from the National Kitchen & Bath Association tell you how.

RUTH ANN TAYLOR, CKD, CBD; designer at Cassedy & Fahrbach Design Partners, Pittsboro, North Carolina; NKBA Eastern Carolina Chapter

REBECCA FLYNN, CKD, CBD; designer at Borelli Design & Cabinetry, San Diego; NKBA San Diego Chapter

NANCY YOUNG, CKD, CBD; designer at Lisenby Kitchen and Bath Showroom, Montgomery, Alabama; NKBA Alabama Chapter

BATH FAUCETS

Pick a faucet based on longevity rather than low cost, Taylor says. "Take a look at what the faucet is made of," she says. "If it has plastic fittings instead of glass or ceramic, it will not last as long." Taylor also suggests checking out finishes: "If the style has limited finishes, that restricts your design options." And if you get stuck, talk with a professional kitchen or bath designer. "Ask designers what you can expect from a quality standpoint," she says. "If they're good at their jobs, they'll have answers for you."

DISHWASHERS

Flynn's dishwasher must-have: quietness. "Look at that rating first," she says. From there, Flynn suggests assessing all brands of dishwashers. "Don't get hung up on the name," she says. "If you only want to spend X amount of dollars, I think lower-end brands can be a good value." Once you've narrowed down the brand you want, talk to the appliance representative. "Ask which brands are being returned or receive lots of complaints, and read customer service reports," Flynn says.

PENDANT LIGHTS

Before you shop for a pendant light, decide whether you want it to take center stage in your room or you want other amenities to steal the show. "Sometimes a pendant can add pizzazz to a calm room," Young says. "But sometimes you want a more subdued pendant so it won't overshadow your beautiful granite countertops." Young also recommends checking functionality. "A 40 to 60 watt fixture is not going to give you enough task lighting," she says. "Also, you need to think about how easy it will be to clean and replace the bulb, too."

Designers are members of the National Kitchen & Bath Association (NKBA). A certified kitchen designer (CKD) or certified bath designer (CBD) has at least seven years of experience and 60 hours of training. A certified master kitchen and bath designer (CMKBD) has 10 years of experience and 100 hours of training.

WITH OUR DESIGNERS' ADVICE IN MIND, WE WENT SHOPPING. THESE KITCHEN AND BATH FIXTURES PASSED OUR VALUE TEST.

