

OCTOBER 2019

# House Beautiful

## THE Kitchen ISSUE

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# Open House

KITCHEN EDITION

If the kitchen is the heart of the home, these five top kitchen designers know exactly what makes it tick. **Editorial Director Joanna Saltz** gets all the beats.



Joanna Saltz  
@josaltz

**Want to talk?** E-mail me at [editor@housebeautiful.com](mailto:editor@housebeautiful.com).

**Joanna Saltz:** For starters, what makes a kitchen designer different from an interior designer?

**Matthew Quinn:** Interior designers and architects don't really care where the Saran Wrap goes. They're thinking finishes, the work triangle. But it's so much more than that.

**Karen Williams:** With all the technology happening in the kitchen—all the changes in appliances and materials—you really need someone with this specialized knowledge to guide you through it. **Change the drapery, but change those counters? Not so easy.**

**Matthew Ferrarini:** I like to compare it to the medical world: You have your general surgeon who knows about every category, but then you have your neurosurgeons. I consider kitchen designers more the neurosurgeons.

**“The kitchen is like an orchestra. If you don't have a few instruments, you really notice the difference.”**

—KAREN WILLIAMS

**Karen:** My rates just went up!

**Jo:** People think it's countertops and cabinet colors—period. They don't understand all the new things you guys are constantly learning about.

**Matthew F:** That's something I notice with kitchen designers. We're creative, but we're structured creatives.

**Jo:** Solutions-oriented.

**Sarah Blank:** This whole group, we have a vast amount of experience. I mean, I started in 1981. We are all *trained*.



Karen Williams  
@stcharlesnewyork



For a beach house, Karen Williams chose glimmering tiles to complement the nearby water view.

**Jo:** How much of your job is technical, and how much is about beauty?

**Matthew Q:** If it's a family, I like to observe their habits, what they're doing in the space and where it's not working for them. There's a science to it: the location of the cutlery drawer relative to the dishwasher, the trash can to the sink. All those things require taking steps, and saving steps gives people more time with their families.

**You can save somebody 40 to 50 hours a year!** My staff loves that. They're all about, *What good are we doing?*

**Karen:** Getting to know the



The powder blue of a Lacanche range and matching hood adds subtle punch to this white kitchen by Matthew Ferrarini.

To see more of Matthew's work, flip to page 44.



Matthew Ferrarini  
@matthew\_ferrarini

PHOTOGRAPHERS: FROM TOP: WILLIAM GEDDES FOR ST. CHARLES NEW YORK; MICHAEL PERSICO; LEAD DESIGNER: MATTHEW FERRARINI; CO-DESIGNERS: JENNE NELTHROPP AND DONNA FERRARINI

PORTRAITS BY ALLIE HOLLOWAY

# Open House



Christopher Peacock  
@christopherpeacock



Christopher picked lush materials—shagreen, brass, walnut—for his kitchen at the 2019 Kips Bay Decorator Show House.

family is first and foremost. I like to call it the gossip, because they'll say, "Oh, my husband makes a hot lunch, and when Aunt Mary comes, we do this." It's getting to know their lifestyle in the particular space.

**Christopher:** I walk the client through my process with a Sharpie and tracing paper. All of a sudden, you're in a real conversation, and they're talking about this sort of inner sanctum of life that we're trying to get to.

**Sarah:** When I'm brought in on a job, I always say, "Please don't clean up!" **I want to see what's piled on the counter. I want to see what the range looks like after breakfast. I want to see the dishes.**

**Karen:** And where you park the car and bring the groceries in; where the kids are dumping

the backpacks. We're putting it together so that the entire *back of house* works.

**Sarah:** Sometimes they've been doing it wrong for so many years, they don't know that there's a better way!

**Jo:** What's the biggest mistake people make when designing their kitchen?

**Christopher:** I've had clients come to us with a very, very traditional home, and they want to put something very, very traditional in it. But there's definitely a design "use by" date. A kitchen is a permanent thing,

Sarah Blank  
@sarahblank  
design



right? So sometimes we've had to advise them so that they don't get stuck in time.

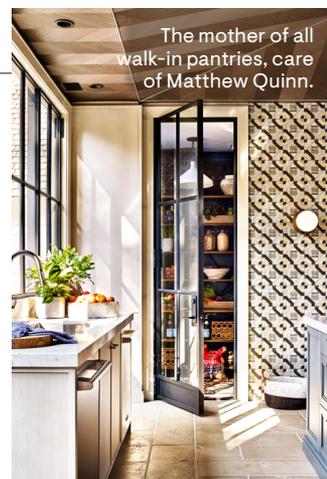
**Matthew F:** On the flip side, people are seeing shiplap on their Instagram Explore page, so they think, This is the direction I want to go. Trends are fine—trends are good for our industry—but **you're seeing a lot of spaces that lack meaning because they're just white walls and this cookie-cutter, boho-California vibe.**

**Sarah:** I had a client who—at the 11th hour, when the kitchen was already custom-cut and made—went online, and then told me, "I really want to do a farmhouse sink!"

**Karen:** The one that knocked me over was the woman who said, "I want black windows." And I thought, Oh boy, you're really dating yourself.

**Jo:** When you're on social media, it's easy to feel like everybody's doing this thing that you're not doing, and you need to be doing it. It's the FOMO generation.

**Matthew F:** It's people blindly following design trends, as opposed to figuring out what their style is and who they really are. That takes time!



The mother of all walk-in pantries, care of Matthew Quinn.

Matthew Quinn  
@matthew  
quinn  
design



A lightly weathered paint finish gives cabinets an antique look in a kitchen designed by Sarah.

**"The client should feel that their opinion is important. It's their life, their family!"**

—SARAH BLANK

PHOTOGRAPHERS, FROM TOP: EMILY FOLLOWILL, FROM QUINTESSENTIAL KITCHENS AND SPACES BY MATTHEW QUINN, VOLUME TWO; NICK SARGENT; FRITZ VON DER SCHULENBURG, DESIGNER: SARAH BLANK