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Contractor Confidential

A nuts-and-bolts guy talks about design trends he likes—and a few he could live without—in kitchens and baths

/// BY BRADLEY LINCOLN

Magazine-ready kitchens and bathrooms don't spring fully formed from an interior designer's imagination. Or from an architect's vision, no matter how inspired. It's a team effort, with a good general contractor as one of the most valuable players.

Having worked on high-end homes with high-profile architectural firms such as Brininstool + Lynch, Wheeler Kearns, and Vinci/Hamp for more than 21 years, contractor **Jake Goldberg** and his team (Goldberg General Contracting, ggcinc.net) have all kinds of experience under their belts (and accolades in their files). Goldberg, who grew up with an architect father and a designer mother, understands the symbiotic relationship necessary between the three professions.

"A great home starts with a contractor who can embrace the language of the architect and interior designer," he says. "This shared vision, paired with skilled craftsmen, allows for unlimited possibilities."

First and foremost, Goldberg recommends bringing the general contractor in as a consultant early in the design process. "We'll make sure that the designs are in line with the client's expectations and budget," he says. "It's money well spent if your contractor has experience and design knowledge. An architect or designer can think up things in a certain way and not realize that it's a particularly expensive approach to something that has a more practical, often less expensive alternative."

Here are some of the tips Goldberg has picked up in his years of installing kitchens and baths:

Island Opinion "When you consider the dollars spent on a home renovation, typically a



Be careful with island cooktops, advises contractor **Jake Goldberg** (left). The cooking area should be as far away as possible from where people might congregate (as above, in this Gold Coast kitchen designed by Michael Richman).

large portion goes into the kitchen, for good reason. This is where people spend the most time every day, with family at dinner or at parties, and they always congregate around the island. That's why I don't recommend putting cooktops or sinks in them unless you have to, for space reasons. It's nicer to have those elements against the wall, and use the island surface for food prep and presentation."

Counter Intelligence "The trend for kitchen counters is to get away from highly polished granite that embodies the flashiness of the 1980s. Honed surfaces are in vogue today—they have a nice rich texture, a matte feel, and are understated and sophisticated. There's a lot of interest in concrete, but I'm not really a fan of it for counters. It's usually more expensive than natural stone, and it's less predictable. The little samples

