



The global kitchen with sleek, clean lines is increasing in popularity in the United States.



The traditional kitchen with detailed custom cabinetry is still very popular in the Cleveland area. (Photographs courtesy of Plato Kitchen and Somrak Kitchens)

Somrak Kitchens offers decades of kitchen design experience

By LISA FREDRICKSON

Somrak Kitchens is a family-owned business that has been providing design services, cabinetry, appliances and kitchen technology in the Greater Cleveland area for more than 60 years. While selling Tracy stainless steel kitchens for apartment buildings, Robert Somrak, Sr. became acquainted with many builders who wanted him to design and install kitchens for their homes. This business transitioned into the creation of upscale custom kitchens and Somrak Kitchens was founded.

Today, Robert, Sr. is joined in the business by his children, Linda Hilbig and Robert, Jr., and together they combine experience, education and expertise to provide their loyal clientele with the kitchens of their dreams.

According to Ms. Hilbig, the single most important part of the kitchen design process is to listen to the homeowner to determine what it is they want. Experts at Somrak determine if, for example, the homeowners want space to entertain or a place for the kids to do their homework, she said. "It used to be that the kitchen was strictly for food preparation and clean up,"

Ms. Hilbig said. "Now it's the heart of the home, and, with today's open floor plans," she continued, "it has become a central part of a home's living space." Somrak Kitchens are created by a team of designers, who all have degrees in the design field, to address a homeowner's unique needs while maximizing available space. "Form follows function," she said. "It has to look good, but it has to work."

Ms. Hilbig also attributes the increased importance of the kitchen within the home to a return to the art of cooking. "With the increased emphasis on eating right and cooking healthy, cooking has become more of an event," she said. Today's families continue to balance a busy schedule, though, which has raised the importance of kitchen appliances that are both attractive and efficient. While this need for efficiency has driven the high-end appliance market, Ms. Hilbig said, Somrak Kitchens offers products from many fine manufacturers in a variety of price points and styles.

Ms. Hilbig has worked at Somrak Kitchens since 1977 and has seen much change in kitchen designs throughout the years. While the Old World Tuscan look is still very popular, she

said, she is seeing a movement away from the traditional kitchen. "People are moving around the world and these influences are coming to the kitchen," Ms. Hilbig said. Today, there is a global look in kitchens, she said, with clean, minimalistic lines that produce a simple yet elegant kitchen.

At Somrak Kitchens, attention to detail does not stop with the design service. Ms. Hilbig and her brother, who both have business degrees, have set Somrak apart through systems they have established to help minimize errors in everything from order processing to inventory control to installation that provide checks and balances at each step of the process. "Every box is opened and inspected before it goes to the homeowner," she said. "We also have our own installers that have worked here for 30-plus years," she added.

Somrak Kitchens is a local company that is dedicated to staying in the community and giving back to the community. They support local charitable organizations as well as the national Leukemia and Lymphoma Society by hosting fundraisers at their showrooms in Westlake and Bedford Heights. "We bring chefs in and people

can cook right alongside the chef," Ms. Hilbig said.

The Somrak family takes great pride in their ability to stay on top of kitchen trends and provide superior craftsmanship with dedicated, knowledgeable service while giving back to the community, but they are most proud of the relationships they have developed over the years. "It's a people business," Ms. Hilbig said. "My dad is seeing grandchildren now of people he originally did kitchens for," she said. "It's also rewarding," she added, "when people tell us they know a Somrak Kitchen when they see it because of its beauty and quality."

Somrak Kitchens specializes in kitchens, and over the years they have learned what works best for people and their lifestyles. "We are selling a design service," Ms. Hilbig said. "We plan to be here for years to come," she added, "and that provides our customers with peace of mind."

For more information on Somrak Kitchens, visit somrakkitchens.com or call 440.808.6088 in Westlake or 216.464.6500 in Bedford Heights.