



KITCHEN IQ

In Living Color

by Dina Cheney

MOSAIC BACKSPLASHES BRING ART TO THE KITCHEN

Q I'd love to add a mosaic to my backsplash. Do you know of any local artisans who create them? Are there any maintenance issues I should be aware of?

Great choice. Beautiful as well as practical, mosaics are perfect for a backsplash. They add color and pattern and are a cinch to clean. Only those made with natural stone or crackled or unsealed ceramic require once-a-year sealing, which you can easily do yourself. Otherwise, just wipe down the surface with soap and water or a mild solution.

A good place to start is The Tile Shop (in Ridgefield and Newtown), where you'll find tiles from all over the world. This shop can design a mosaic or create one—in tile, glass or stone—from an image that you bring in. In fact, The Tile Shop used a customer's photograph to duplicate an ancient Roman mosaic. Or, you can choose from some already laid-out designs.

Also try Ceramic Design Limited (in Greenwich or Westport) and Klaff's (in Danbury, South Norwalk or Westport), which offer ready-made mosaics, as well, and International Tiles in Darien, where in addition to mosaics you can find a large selection of hand-painted tiles.

If you're feeling crafty, work with Kathy Love (ktlovemosaiqs@aol.com), a talented Norwalk-based artisan who comes highly recommended by the Brookfield Craft Center. Love even offers classes in the art of mosaic at the center.

Q My husband and I are turning 70 next year and we're planning ahead. What kitchen products are ergonomically correct for the elderly?

This is a good time to think small. There's no need for a range the size of a small car or a professional-style refrigerator that takes up an entire wall. Instead, look for items that offer safety, accessibility and ease of use. For example, it's best to overlook the new dishwashers with tiny controls hidden on the top of the door. They're sleek but not always practical; you want all of the controls and displays on your appliances to be readable.

Companies like Kohler and Moen have teamed up with automation specialist

Technical Concepts to make motion-sensitive on/off faucets. With these, lifting the



Tile Talk | Mosaic backsplashes like this one by Norwalk-based artist Kathy Love add a colorful and personal touch to your kitchen. They're easy to clean, too. Create your own design, work from a photograph or buy an existing model. See Resources.

lever isn't an issue and it's impossible to leave the water running. If you're more of a hands-on person, try a faucet with single-lever controls, including a spray head, since they're simpler to use.

Wall ovens with side-swing doors are also a boon for accessibility. Try Frigidaire's electric model GLEB27S7C. And microwaves, as long as they're placed at counter level, are incredibly useful, too. The GE Web site recommends ovens with lockout switches, ample interior lighting and touch control.

When it comes to ranges, safety is critical. Even though I vastly prefer cooking with gas, electric appliances eliminate worry about gas leaks. Either way, opt for a stovetop with front or side controls—you never want to have to reach across hot burners! Also, consider Stove Guard, a product that automatically turns off the stove

when it's left unattended for too long. For ease while you're cooking, choose a product with a smooth surface or continuous grates so you can slide pots around without a problem.

Your refrigerator should have side-by-side doors, with a front ice and water dispenser. GE suggests opting for a model with spill-proof, slide-out shelves, gallon-container storage in the door and see-through vegetable/fruit bins. For dishwashers, the company recommends a model with electronic problem indicators and a lockout switch to prevent accidental operation.

Finally, don't forget details like cabinet handles and drawer pulls. Look for D- or U-shaped pulls or magnetic touch latches. (The site www.active-forever.com is a great source for small kitchen helpers.) For more ideas, check CTC&G's kitchen special in the January 2006 issue. See Resources.