

Email this article
Print this article
Most popular pages

Click to send
Choose File Print or Ctrl P or Apple P
Today | This Week

Soak up good life in a freestanding tub

Susan Hall

The (Louisville, Ky.) Courier-Journal
May. 10, 2006 12:00 AM

Family attorney Melinda Wandzilak says her life is crazy, with people calling her, talking about losing custody and doing jail time.

But at the end of the day, she can sink into a deep, warm bathtub at her remodeled home.

"I did that last night," she says. "I don't do that nearly often enough."

Americans increasingly want to turn off their ringers and pagers and create sanctuaries at home that feel safe and tranquil, which could explain a resurgence in beautiful bathtubs.

Todd Stengel of Todd Stengel Construction in Louisville, Ky., says of Wandzilak's bathroom, "I wanted it to be very feng shui."

The ancient Chinese art of placement seeks to achieve harmony and balance. In embracing it, Stengel, who says Wandzilak gave him free rein in the remodel, says he sought a design that was calm and simple.

Although we are becoming a nation of shower-takers, Stengel says his high-end clients want both shower and tub.

Getting the tub off the floor on legs or in a decorative cradle makes the room look larger, he says, by exposing more of the floor. He says many clients are ripping out their built-in tubs.

He was speaking from a job site where he says a 644-pound tub had been delivered and would have to be hoisted to a second floor and up open stairways.

You can get them in brass; you can get them in copper," he says.

Home magazines show graceful tubs in elegant, dramatically lit bathrooms, along with art-glass sinks and heated towel racks. These are very different from the traditional 5-foot inset tub found in most homes.

There also is an array of options for the discerning bather with deep pockets.

Along with its line of classic claw-foot and slipper-style tubs, the Signature Hardware company (www.signaturehardware.com) offers a two-person bronze slipper tub for \$31,500, a cowhide-wrapped tub for \$4,995 and a mahogany tub for \$4,988.

The Cincinnati-area company says "Hollywood-types" and posh hotels tend to buy the priciest tubs, but the bronze and Japanese-style tubs have generated a lot of interest.

"Some customers prefer bold, new designs that aren't commonly found on the home-improvement scene," says company spokeswoman Rachel Turner.

"People are generally willing to pay more for these innovative products because of their distinctive looks and exceptional quality."

Bath-fixtures dealers here say most high-end buyers are looking for hydrotherapy tubs.

It's part of a continuing trend to bring the spa experience home, according to trade magazine Kitchen and Bath Design News. It's more about wellness and relaxing than being in physical therapy.

Traditional whirlpool baths used water jets to produce intense blasts. Without regular cleaning, they could develop mildew problems from standing water in the lines. Air jets produce a gentler massage and, because there's no water in the lines, the mildew problems are eliminated.

Fixtures manufacturer Kohler has found that men tend to prefer the blast from the past of water jets, while women prefer the gentler "champagne bubbles" of air jets, according to Bob Giese, staff "human factors" specialist for the company.

The compromise: Many companies now make tubs that combine both and offer more options that allow individuals to customize

the flow in their tubs. Kohler makes a two-person tub with individual controls on each side.

For those looking for the style of a retro tub, companies such as Signature Hardware and BainUltra offer freestanding tubs with motors that can be hidden.

"(Tubs are) getting deeper and more contoured, so they're more comfortable to sit in," says tub salesman Rick Miller.

"Chromatherapy is getting to be a big thing," Miller says. A sequence of changing colors in the water can improve mood, advocates of chromatherapy say.

In keeping with the spa experience, some tub-makers also market lines of aromatherapy products.

For instance, Kohler's 34 and one-half inch deep "Sok" tub continuously overflows into a surrounding trough, offering a cascading sound. Its chromatherapy option turns the water a one-minute sequence of six colors - white, violet, blue, green, yellow and red - with the option to stop on any one.

For people with mobility issues - or those planning ahead - Accessible Environments (www.acesinc.com) offers luxury amenities in a tub with a door on the side, starting at \$3,850.

Email this article
Print this article
Most popular pages

Click to send
Choose File Print or Ctrl P or Apple P
Today | This Week