

MODULAR MUSINGS

In 2026, modular kitchens have clearly moved beyond rigid minimalism to reflect the realities of modern Indian homes.

By Bindu Gopal Rao



PHOTO COURTESY: KÜCHE7

Luxury kitchens are about being convenient, almost effortless technology that makes them more functional.

While clean lines and uncluttered layouts remain important, today's kitchens feel warmer and more personal. Experts weigh in.

DESIGN LANGUAGE

In 2026, luxury does not equal pretentious. It's more about being convenient, almost effortless technology that makes your kitchen more functional. Naeem Chauhan, Founder and Managing Director, Küche7, says, "We haven't moved entirely beyond minimalism. But it has become warmer. Minimalism was mostly simple, a little sterile. Now, the trends have shifted to something more personal, simple, but more lived-in. Personal expression and individuality are more in focus rather than simply removing all the clutter. Even in kitchen technology, people prefer smarter devices that are subtle and not overly in your face. Something that makes your experience easier but isn't pretentious." Kitchens today are rapidly moving towards being more flexible, adaptable spaces. The rise of open-concept kitchens, islands serving as gathering points, mood lighting, and breakfast bars provides evidence of this trend. Modern kitchens are being designed as "living kitchens" that adapt to changing family needs.

COLOUR CUES

Natural materials, softer colour palettes, tactile finishes, and gentle curves are being used to create spaces that feel lived-in rather than clinical. The emphasis is on design that supports everyday life, where functionality is integrated quietly into



Naeem Chauhan, Founder and Managing Director, Küche7



Vaishali Shah, Design Lead- Home Storage, Interio by Godrej.

the background and the kitchen feels welcoming rather than purely utilitarian. "Contemporary colour palettes lean toward longevity and comfort. Soft off-whites, greige, sage and olive greens, muted blue-greys, and earthy tones are preferred, often paired with wood accents and



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Neutral colours and cosy colours are in high demand.



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matte, fingerprint-resistant finishes. These choices are practical, easy to maintain, and visually calm, making them well-suited for Indian households where kitchens see heavy daily use," says Vaishali Shah, Design Lead - Home Storage, Interio by Godrej. Neutral colours and cosy colours are the trends for 2026. The colours are centred around mushroom shades, as opposed to the previous, white-toned cream shades.

BALANCING ACT

The balance between luxury and functionality is being achieved through thoughtful material choices and intelligent layouts. Popular layouts like L-shaped kitchens continue to work well for Indian homes, as they optimise space, improve movement, and support efficient workflows without compromising visual appeal. Harshal Mundhe, Vice President - Product Category Management, Hafele India, says, "Luxury in modern kitchens is defined by comfort, usability, and reliability, though visual excess can be used selectively to create impact. Well-planned storage, smooth-operating hardware, and durable materials ensure a premium experience. Kitchens are designed for frequent use, heavy cooking, and efficient workflows. Features such as soft-close systems, ergonomic layouts, and easy-access storage are standard in high-end kitchens. This approach ensures performance without compromising refinement, sophistication, or the occasional design statement."

GOING GREEN

Sustainability plays an increasingly important role in material selection for modular kitchens.



Harshal Mundhe, Vice President – Product Category Management, Hafele India

are prioritising long-lasting materials, low-emission boards, and finishes that reduce the need for frequent replacement. The emphasis is on durability, responsible sourcing, and reducing waste during production and installation. This also includes verified processes such as certified climate-neutral manufacturing, documented carbon offsetting, and the use of materials sourced through audited supply chains. Measures like energy-efficient production, water-based lacquers, and certified wood sourcing support long term environmental responsibility rather than short term trends."

DESIGN TRENDS

Indian cooking habits are also influencing global modular kitchen design. The need for robust storage, better ventilation, and accessories that support intensive cooking has led to innovations such as advanced chimney systems, tall units, and pull-out storage. These solutions are increasingly shaping how kitchens are designed beyond India, making them more functional and culturally responsive. Naeem explains, "Indian kitchens are made for durability. Indian food involves a



Sukriti Sharrma, Partner, Plüscher

lot of spices, heavy pans, frequent cooking, oils, etc., which is why the materials used are durable and stain-resistant, and the colour palettes lean towards darker colours. Since Indian cuisine has spread worldwide, and as people move towards vegetarianism and veganism, a lot of Indian dishes cater to that group. This is why kitchen design worldwide is influenced by Indian cuisine, cooking habits, and techniques. 3D walkthroughs have become an integral part of design today. The owner can see what their kitchen would look like in person. They can change any aspect of the design and personalise it based on their personal preferences. They can change the colour and design of their kitchens in real time before finalising anything."

TECH TALK

Technology now plays a quiet but important role. Smart kitchens are less about visible gadgets and more about seamless integration from touchless faucets and intelligent appliances to digital tools that help consumers visualise and customise their kitchens before purchase. This flexibility allows families to plan better and derive greater long-term



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Modern kitchens are being designed as "living kitchens" that adapt to changing family needs.



PHOTO COURTESY: HAFFEL INDIA

Modular systems today are designed to evolve, allowing layouts and storage to adapt as family needs change.



PHOTO COURTESY: PLÜSCH

Sustainability plays a practical role in material selection.

value. Harshal says, "In 2026, smart technology in modular kitchens is integrated in a subtle and purposeful manner. The emphasis is on enhancing convenience, safety, and efficiency rather than making technology overt. Intelligent lighting, automated drawers, and seamlessly connected appliances have become part of everyday kitchen design, operating quietly in the background to improve usability without adding complexity." This evolution is also reflected in advanced cooking technologies such as Häfele's Cronus Digi-Step

Hobs, which combine precision with intuitive control. Equipped with Digital Multi Timers, each burner can be individually timed for different dishes, offering greater convenience and flexibility. The innovative Graduated Flame Technology enables multiple flame levels to suit different cooking techniques. These technologies are designed to prevent hazards while preserving the familiarity of traditional cooking experiences, demonstrating how smart solutions today function as seamless, purposeful enhancements to everyday living.

LIFESTYLE LOVE

Most importantly, kitchens are no longer treated as fixed installations. Modular systems today are designed to evolve, allowing layouts and storage to adapt as family needs change. "This shift reflects a deeper understanding of how Indian homes function, where flexibility, durability, and value matter as much as aesthetics. For architects and designers, this means unlearning rigid rules and designing kitchens around real usage patterns, ensuring spaces remain relevant, efficient, and meaningful over time," avers Vaishali.

Today's modular systems are designed to allow reconfiguration over time. Cabinets, internal fittings, and storage modules can be adjusted or replaced as family needs change. This flexibility is especially relevant for urban homes where spaces must serve multiple purposes across different life stages. Modular planning also reduces the need for full dismantling. It allows upgrades to be done in parts rather than all at once. "Architects and designers need to move away from treating kitchens as secondary or purely aesthetic spaces and recognise them as primary areas that require early planning priority. Kitchen planning demands the same level of functional analysis as any other core area of the home. Assumptions based on standard layouts or visual trends often fail to address actual usage patterns. Each kitchen must be planned around behaviour rather than appearance. This approach results in better performance and long-term satisfaction for the client," concludes Sukriti. **ASL**



PHOTO COURTESY: HÄFELE INDIA

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