

Home show is place to go for low-budget decorating inspiration

Celebrity designer offers cheap ideas

By ANNETTE JONES

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Decorate a room with \$500? Joan Steffend, host of "Decorating Cents" on Home and Garden Television, says you can.

Steffend will talk about low-budget decorating during the Indianapolis Home Show's décor and interior design days Friday to Jan. 28 at the Indiana State Fairgrounds. She will speak Jan. 27 and 28.

The home show runs Friday through Feb. 3.

Steffend speaks from experience when it comes to remodeling.

She and her husband recently completed their own kitchen renovation, so she has plenty of advice on redoing a room with minimal stress.

The Steffends moved out of their house from July to November for the work and still moved back too soon.

Take time to plan your kitchen, she said in a telephone interview. "Spend months," Steffend said. "You are going to be there a long time."

Know what appliances, light fixtures, floors and colors you want and make a floor plan before you

begin. Look at it as an organization of space, she advised.

When carpenters and other workers ask a question, they need decisions right away, Steffend said.

Personalize your kitchen to fit your needs in the planning stage. If you have a designer, request one-on-one consultations and make sure you end up with your ideas and not a cookie-cutter kitchen, she added.

For example, Steffend put a bookcase in her kitchen.

"It has no function, but it gives it character and makes it personal," she said. She also added a sofa to make the room more inviting.

Set a budget and stick to it, she said, but expect that work is going to cost more and take longer than planned.

The kitchen is the most expensive room in the house to remodel, but the work is usually worth it because it's the place where families spend most of their waking time, Steffend said.

Her other advice: Comparison shop and be prepared for a mess during renovations.

Trends in kitchen decor include soft color schemes, stainless-steel appliances, induction cook tops and stone counters.

Eclectic kitchens are the coming thing, she said. Use things you've collected in your kitchen.

Don't follow someone else, or you'll end up with their kitchen, she said.

High-end home coffee

You thought \$5 a cup was pricey?

By T. SUSAN CHANG
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

In an era when coffee lovers have to break a 10-dollar bill for a drink, a growing number of people are willing to invest \$1,000 or more to make the perfect cup of coffee at home.

Seduced by the gleaming, multi-levered, counter-hogging machines that have begun crowding catalogs and showrooms, more people are willing to spend more money (sometimes significantly so) in pursuit of that perfect cup of Joe.

Consider this the centerpiece of the consumer revolution in coffee. A generation ago, a cup of coffee meant a bottomless mug at the diner, an over-boiled brew from the home percolator, or even — shudder — a spoonful of instant.

Today, it's not uncommon to find homes better equipped than their local Starbucks. And sensing a trend, the kitchen products industry has worked hard to make sure big spenders have plenty to spend it on.

For example, Cooking.com offers a combination coffee and espresso machine with multiple heads, plumb-in filtration, a volumetric pump and integrated burr grinder.

And all for a mere \$3,500 or so.

Even bargain-driven retailer Target offers several \$1,000-plus machines on its Web site.

And people are buying them. Sales of coffee and espresso machines costing



AP PHOTO

The pricey Isomac coffee machine makes a variety of drinks, including espresso.

more than \$100 jumped by 42 percent during the past year, according to consumer research firm NPD Group. The year before, the growth was just 10 percent.

High-end machines are seeing similar growth. At Internet kitchen goods retailer Cooking.com, sales of espresso machines costing \$1,000 or more increased by 56 percent between 2004 and 2005, says spokesman John Gabaldon.

Experts say the trend is a confluence of several long-developing factors in the coffee industry, including the introduction of specialty coffees to the East Coast in the '70s and '80s by coffee pioneers such as George Howell.

On the West Coast, the tech-driven

culture of the 1990s helped give rise to coffee bars. And across the nation, Web forums such as alt.coffee and coffeegEEK.com helped create communities of aficionados.

All that buzz led to the production of bigger, better and more meticulous machines, creating the perfect partner for tech-savvy, coffee-drinking consumers in search of the latest toy.

And out of this caffeine-driven frenzy arose a passionate subgroup: espresso drinkers.

Espresso always has been more a technological artifact than a simple beverage. Without high, stable pressure and water temperature, espresso will be sour or bitter, or fail to achieve its distinguishing complex aroma and syrupy texture.

Pulling a shot of espresso (as the making of one is called) is like a small-scale shuttle launch, says Peter Lynagh, who heads quality control at Howell's company, Terroir, a high-end coffee roaster based in Acton, Mass.

"It's really quite difficult, and you want everything to go right. A lot of these techies have developed the machine, pushed it in a direction far beyond what it was originally. They're very uncompromising, real control freaks," he said.

Getting that right is the perfect excuse for spending lots of money on machines up to the task. And if you're going to spend plenty on the machine, you aren't likely to settle for just any old coffee beans.

Howell, whose company specializes in single-origin coffees, says many consumers are even roasting their own beans.

These are coffee fanatics who drink their coffee like they drink their wine, he said.

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"We get some amazing answers," she said. "People surprise themselves."

The business partners constantly trade ideas with each other. Nassauer said Whitney comes up with more grand ideas, while she is more practical.

Their personal styles are not alike. Whitney's style is European industrial, while Nassauer's has more of a carnival feel. She likes to use things from old circuses and fairs.

She said repurposed objects can be used with shabby chic, traditional or contemporary décor.

Whitney grew up in a family that made weekly trips to garage sales.

"I always looked for cool things," she said.

One thing she learned is to be tactful at sales. If someone has an object marked \$25, don't offend them by offering \$5, she said.

Ask them what their bottom-dollar price is or how much they will accept.

If they don't go down, check back at the end of the day, when they might mark remaining objects down.

Whitney believes in recycling. She has used ceiling board from a house for a floor in her own home, a wooden handrail for-



SUBMITTED PHOTO

The proprietors of Junkmarket have a long list of ideas for turning trash into treasure, like this old deck chair that was covered in fabric.

merly used by ballet dancers for a stair rail, lights from an old theater in a hallway, and a huge gear from a ship as a window opening dividing the dining room from her office.

"Most of the things we do are pretty simple," she said. "It's just repurposing. It fits all skill levels."

Nassauer said the search for junk is as much fun as putting it together. They often make such trips family adventures.

The women will have a set full of junk at their presentations so visitors can get ideas.

"We give them tons of tips," Nassauer said.

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