

PULL THROUGH

Hardware is much more than the thing that opens the cabinets

BY NIGEL F. MAYNARD

BELWITH-KEELER

One of eight new collections, Avenue is a minimalist line of cabinet hardware that is inspired by designs found in urban engineering. The shapes portray strength and elegance, the company says.

belwith-keeler.com / CIRCLE 859

Many small elements play an important role in kitchens and baths, and decorative hardware is on that list. Sure, knobs and pulls are utilitarian objects whose primary purpose is to open and close doors and drawers, but they also have a design function.

"I look at hardware as an accessory," says Jacklyn Graniczny, design director at Sublime Homes in Dyer, Ind. "It's an element that adds completeness, convenience, and attractiveness."

Homeowners, on the other hand, are often ambivalent about hardware's ability to enhance a well-designed kitchen. And they may balk at spending the money for quality pulls. For these consumers, hardware ranks low on the list of priorities, after such choices as countertops and appliances.

"Hardware often gets left on the back burner," says Knikki Grantham, trend manager at Keeler Products. "It's the thing [homeowners] touch most in the kitchen, but it's the thing they think about the least."

But for those consumers who understand the ben-

efits of the right hardware, their options are vast—including pulls in various finishes and longer lengths.

"We're still seeing a rise in the desire for longer pulls within families to fit the pull to the drawer instead of one size throughout," says Stephanie Lowe, product manager for decorative products at Hardware Resources.

Grantham confirms that long pulls have been popular with homeowners for a while, and she has an idea why: "A lot of people [use long pulls] because it dramatically changes the look of the kitchen. When you elongate the handle, it gives the illusion the cabinets are taller."

On the finish side, "anything polished and shiny is really on point," says Lowe.

Christine Zimmer, product manager at Top Knobs, agrees that silver finishes, such as polished nickel and polished chrome, remain popular, but she finds that many designers and homeowners are now willing to experiment with warmer tones.



TOP KNOBS

The Devon Collection draws inspiration from the character of harbor towns and villages of Devon County in southwest England. Featuring an industrial yet classic appeal, the collection includes 36 knobs, pulls, and appliance pulls from five series. Eight finishes are available. topknobs.com / **CIRCLE 860**

AMEROCK

The Esquire Collection of knobs and pulls features a mixed-media design and textured accents. Pieces are finished in satin nickel/oil-rubbed bronze.

amerock.com / **CIRCLE 861**



HARDWARE RESOURCES

A new addition to the Jeffrey Alexander line, the Alvar family of contemporary pulls offers a softer approach to accessorizing cabinetry with flat-panel doors.

Each pull has a clean, curved profile and comes in five trendy finishes. Sizes range from 3 to 7.6 inches. hardwareresources.com / **CIRCLE 862**



“We expect to see more black, gold, rose gold, and copper in 2017,” Zimmer says. “We’ve also seen the incorporation of texture in many areas of decorative hardware, and we expect that to continue.”

Some of the hottest finishes in Keeler’s lineup are brushed brass and gold tones, Grantham says. “Gold palettes are hot.”

When it comes to style, hardware takes its cues from cabinets; as cabinets have moved toward cleaner styles, hardware has followed suit. “In all areas of the hardware industry we are seeing a shift toward transitional and contemporary styles,” says Zimmer. “There is a focus on simple and minimalist design.”

But how should designers approach clients with all of these choices? Graniczny takes a methodical approach. “A great starting point is to find out whether they are after practicality or aesthetics,” she advises. “A mother of three might not be too keen to source chrome pulls for her kitchen because the

chrome is going to show all the fingerprints and become a high-maintenance accessory.” But a single individual, she continues, might see the chrome as the thing that enhances the space, she says.

Zimmer has another strategy: “We like to suggest that designers and homeowners start with the appliance pull and work their way back into the kitchen design.”

Lowé recommends that designers convey to homeowners the importance of their hardware choices. Hardware, she says, is what typically draws the eye first when you walk into a kitchen, so clients need to understand that “it’s the accessory that can express [their] personality to everyone who walks into their home.”

Finally, Grantham says designers should avoid putting people into brackets of modern or traditional. “It’s more about the fit and the feel,” she says. The designer’s job “is to lead [clients] but help refine their choices.” ■