

## Inside and out bling



Stainless steel appliances can add a pop of shine and a touch of class

### How to clean and maintain stainless steel

No matter the style of a homeowner's kitchen, be it modern, traditional or farmhouse, stainless steel appliances can add a pop of shine and a touch of class. Proponents of stainless steel appliances note their easy maintenance, stylish look and durability. Plus, the neutral tone of stainless steel helps it blend in with just about any color palette.

Stainless steel is lauded for its strength and resistance to corrosion and rust. These attributes make it a popular choice in kitchens, where moisture is an issue. Although they are certainly durable choices, stainless steel appliances require maintenance to keep them looking and performing at their best. Considering that stainless steel also costs more than other finish options, taking the time to learn proper care can help protect homeowners' investments.

### How to create an effective workflow in the kitchen

Bathroom and kitchen makeovers are some of the most coveted and profitable improvements that can be made to a home. Installing new cabinetry, countertops and appliances can transform the look of a kitchen, but homeowners also must consider the functionality of design when renovating.

The National Kitchen and Bath Association suggests applying the kitchen "work triangle," which is a concept used to create efficient kitchen layouts. The triangle comprises imaginary straight lines drawn from the cooking appliance, sink and refrigerator. These are where much of the work in the kitchen takes place. The general idea is that when the work triangle is positioned accordingly — with the three components in close proximity to one another — the kitchen is easier and more efficient to use. Homeowners will be able to move freely among these elements when they are placed at appropriate distances, reducing wasted steps.

The NKBA suggests following these guidelines to create efficient kitchens.

- No major traffic patterns should cross through the triangle.
- The sum of the work triangle's three sides should not exceed 26 feet. Each portion of the triangle should be between four and nine feet.
- Avoid cutting through an island or a peninsula.
- If the kitchen has only one sink, it should be placed between or across from the cooking surface, preparation area or refrigerator.

The work triangle is a suggestion, not a law of design. As kitchens evolve and more people use them simultaneously, designers may take certain liberties — even having multiple triangles at play. Homeowners should also design their kitchens so they function best for their own individual lifestyles.

Kitchen layout can be just as important as the decor and appliances within the kitchen.

from the top of the appliance and moving down toward the floor.

Consult with the owner's manual before undertaking any maintenance or cleaning. The appliance may have a special coating over the stainless steel to help protect it, and it's best to know what you're dealing with before getting your hands dirty.

If you will be trying a cleaning product or scouring method, always test it first in an inconspicuous spot to see if it is harmful.

Julien, a leader in commercial kitchen equipment, recommends applying cleansers with a soft cloth or sponge. Then wipe dry with a soft, clean cloth or allow to air dry.

Stainless steel remains a popular material in kitchens for sinks and appliances. With care, stainless steel can look like new for years to come.

Baking soda mixed with a little dish soap can be used to remove tough dirt and stains. Rinse well and towel dry to avoid streaking.

Clean and wipe the steel in the direction of the "grain." Usually this means working

### The benefits of backyard koi ponds

Koi ponds can make for beautiful additions to landscaped backyards or home gardens. While many people are drawn to koi ponds because of their aesthetic appeal, there are many additional reasons for homeowners to consider installing koi ponds.

Ponds and water gardens can transform yards rather quickly. Ponds can add appeal to otherwise mundane yards and provide eye-catching, relaxing spots to sit and enjoy the scenery.

Koi ponds have recently fallen into a favor with homeowners in North America, but these popular water features date back several centuries to Asia. Centuries ago, Chinese rice farmers began keeping carp in their rice paddies, and that practice eventually caught on in Japan. The fish started to breed and form slight color variations. Koi, often referred to as "Nishikigoi," are actually descendants of the common carp, though the koi of today are more brightly hued and ornamental fish than carp.

Koi can become a low-maintenance family pet. These fish tend to grow accustomed to having people around, and will often interact with visitors at the surface of the water. It's not unusual to have koi beg for food or take food from a person's hand. They also may tolerate some light handling.

Another benefit of koi ponds is that they create a miniature ecosystem within the yard. When stocked with aquatic plants

and other fish that can help keep mosquito larvae and other parasites at bay, they can sustain themselves quite nicely. Ponds also can attract birds and beneficial insects, such as butterflies and dragonflies. By implementing straight

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vertical walls on the perimeter of the pond and setting up some natural barriers, homeowners can avoid unwanted predators from disturbing their koi ponds.

Koi ponds also provide psychological benefits. The sound of the water can be soothing and relaxing. Sitting by the pond may help alleviate stress, as unwinding next to a pond and watching the fish can help individuals decompress.

Homeowners who have koi ponds may also benefit socially from these eye-catching additions to their landscapes. Homeowners may connect with others who share their passion for koi and water features. This opens up the opportunity to share the landscape and pond with others, building new friends and relationships in the process.



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