

Santa Fe REAL ESTATE Guide

Artisan/craftsman/**builder**

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At-home spas lead latest design trend

by Kurt Faust

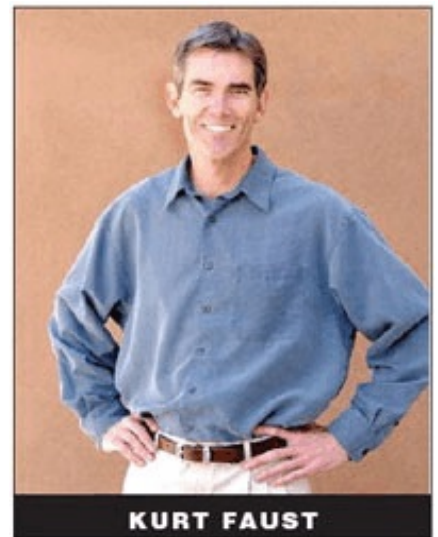
People have gone spa-crazy. According to the International Spa Association, spa-going is increasing in record numbers. Day spas, destination spas, resort spas, cruise spas, fitness spas and medical spas are not enough anymore. People now want to recreate the spa experience at home.

Carefully planned, well-appointed home spas are the newest trend in new Santa Fe. They range from luxurious, spa-like master baths to spa wings that include adjoining meditation rooms, yoga rooms, massage rooms or home gyms.

Design - The home spa is designed to be a tranquil space, so the decor is typically subtle, with warm, neutral colors. The style is often Asian-influenced; a Zen-like design approach creates an uncluttered, stress-free environment. Shiny, glaring surfaces have been replaced by matte and textured finishes. Organic, earthy materials such as slate, tumbled marble, sandstone, limestone, onyx and translucent marbles bring nature to the design aesthetic while adding texture and neutral palette to floors and countertops. Cabinetry is usually handcrafted out of solid wood to build upon the natural theme and provide storage and beauty. Tatami mats, sliding *shoji* screens, *feng-shui* elements, aromatherapy systems and meditation benches carry out the Asian-spa theme, with sound systems; fireplaces; big, cushiony chairs; massage tables and juice bars provide luxurious comfort.

Lighting - The home spa is a respite from the world, so it follows that lighting is soft. Layers of natural and artificial lighting - all on dimmers - create ambiance. Natural light, spilling through skylights and windows, creates an ideal backdrop for a retreat. Recessed fixtures highlight design features and produce soft pools of light. Fixtures placed on either side of the vanity, rather than on top, shine a warm, flattering incandescence without shadows. Linear lighting systems illuminate the floor in the space below vanities while translucent stone countertops lit from underneath provide an ethereal glow.

Technology - Towel warmers, available in wall-mounted and floor-mounted styles, deliver radiant heat to keep towels warm and provide a secondary heat source. Warming drawers keep towels toasty in an inconspicuous built-in drawer in the cabinetry.



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Shower systems, a category that includes body sprays, vertical spas and hand-held showers, are commonly found in home spas. Steam showers are among the most popular of shower systems. One of the newest components offered in shower systems is a steam head that disperses aromatherapy oils.

More people are choosing air-jetted tubs rather than water-jetted tubs for a much quieter, calming bathing experience. The Bain Ultra Tub, available at Santa Fe by Design, is a popular air tub in Santa Fe. Many people like the fact that they can use essential oils, bath teas and flower and fruit essences in this tub, which is not an option in tubs with water jets.

Another new feature in tubs is chromatherapy - the therapeutic use of color. Available at Dahl Plumbing, the Kohler Sok bath with chromatherapy is an air bath in which the water appears to change color. At the touch of a button each color - white, purple, indigo and aqua blue, green, yellow, orange, and red - is displayed for about eight seconds. According to Kohler, research indicates that color has a tangible effect on feelings of well being and comfort.

The International Spa Association's survey indicated that most consumers consider spa treatments a necessity rather than a luxury. Not long ago, having a place to bathe at home was considered a luxury - in 1940 more than 40 percent of U.S. homes were without a bathtub or shower. If home design trends keep moving at this pace, every home is soon to have a spa.

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