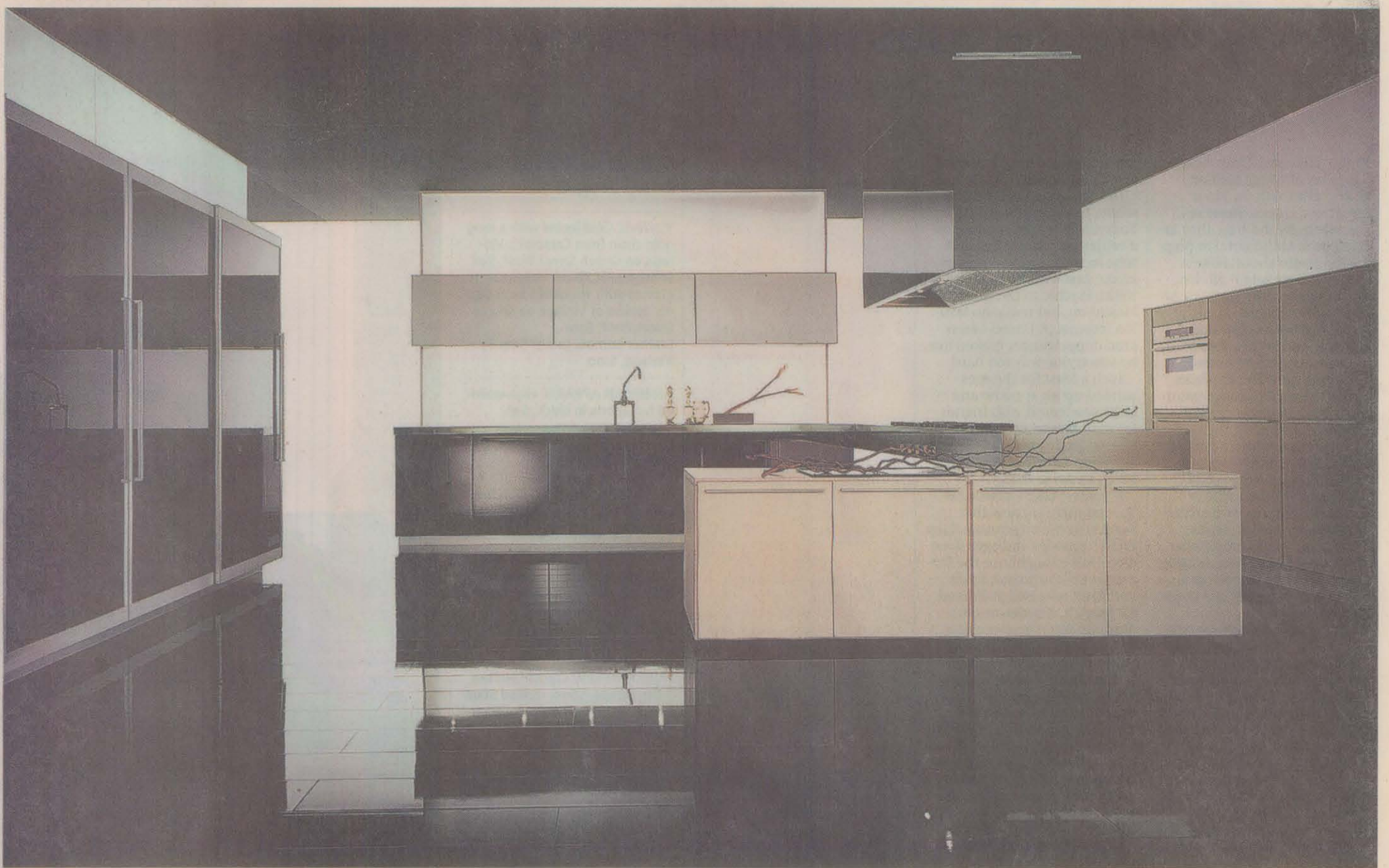


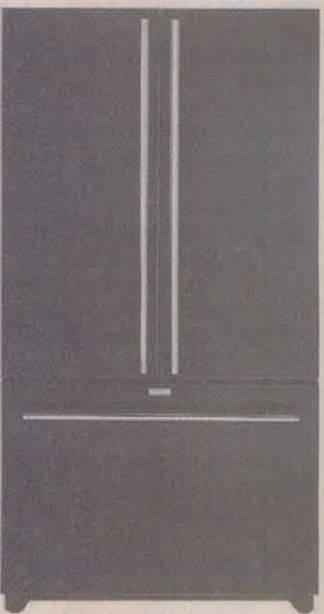
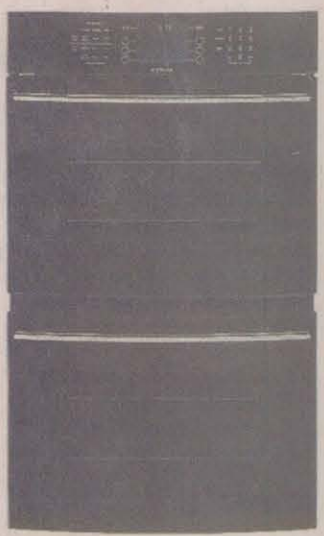
BASIC BLACK



Boffi's LT black kitchen features floors and cabinets in black polyester lacquer that looks like painted glass. The complete kitchen, not including appliances, costs between \$60,000 and \$80,000. Available from Italinteriors, Toronto. www.italinteriors.com, 416-366-9540.

Kitchen cocktail lounge

Why shouldn't the most lived-in room in the house be as dark and dramatic – and as sexy – as a little black dress? **Janice Lindsay** fluffs the canteen



The kitchen will always be the centre of the domestic universe. It's a tribal thing about gathering around the fire and the cooking pot that has morphed into a modern-day desire simply to be close to the fridge. These days, cooking seems like the kitchen's least important function – secondary to partying or just hanging out.

And as kitchens become more like glorified bars than culinary work spaces, it makes sense that we ditch the clinical white surfaces and take the plunge into darkness. Goodbye hospital bright, hello cocktail lounge dark.

Film writer/director Nancy Meyers says that in her movie *The Holiday*, about a transatlantic house swap, it was the Los Angeles black kitchen that was "the film's real eye candy." When Kate Winslet's character swaps her little English cottage for Cameron Diaz's mansion, she gets a kitchen that is all black, minimal and empty. In the fridge, she finds soya milk and water; in the cupboards, Peppid AC. Zone Meals delivers the food.

Just like a little black dress, dark colours slim down bulk and hide the things that are not great to look at – like hinges, hardware and appliances – creating a look of seamless elegance. Lighting and accessories become the room's jewellery.

Four years ago, Toronto designer Christine Ralphs (Lloyd Ralphs Design) used black to

make her long, skinny 1970s galley kitchen into what she calls "a space of glamour and importance." On one side, she installed floor-to-ceiling high-gloss black cabinetry from Ikea. On the other, black cabinets are topped with a 13-foot-long slab of white Carrara marble. She says the combination of black and the glossy white dissolves the walls, making the kitchen look twice its size.

Ralphs says she hesitated before going black in the kitchen in case resale became an issue. However, she now thinks the black kitchen is an asset. "Everyone says it's great. One person called it a Chanel kitchen. The most frequent comment is how sexy it is."

Black kitchens work in the country too. Catherine Randall, the owner of the Curiosity Book Shop in the village of Creemore, 90 minutes northwest of Toronto, was encouraged by her architect, Jim Campbell (Rockside Campbell Design Inc. 705-446-2506), to go dark in the kitchen of her log house. She painted the old turquoise cupboards a dark-brown charcoal colour (Benjamin Moore CC 542 - Willow). Randall says the colour integrates the kitchen into the house, which has black accents and a staircase with a black steel structure.

In his own Victorian home, Campbell has a charcoal-black kitchen (Benjamin Moore Black Panther) that echoes the colour of cast iron. He says he likes the way dark interiors fo-

cus the eye on the views outside. When the walls and cabinets are dark, the views glow "like back-lit projections." Both kitchens have black knobs, hinges and faucets. Randall's black sink is made of an engineered stone, (Silgranit 'Anthracite' by Blanco. www.blanco.com) which is camouflaged by a black laminate counter and backsplash. She says the matte finish of the sink is softer than granite and doesn't show dirt and splash marks. But the counter is another story. It shows every spec of dirt or dust. However, the overall effect of the dark kitchen is worth it, according to Randall.

"Because the colour is uniform and the appliances disappear, it all reads as one," she says. "It allows the things I love, antique utensils and my colourful pottery, to stand out." The ultimate dark kitchen disappears altogether. The K2 in Ecco Ebony designed by Norbert Wengen for Boffi (available through Toronto's Italinteriors. www.italinteriors.com. 416-366-4915) is about \$22,000, not including appliances. It is a beautifully engineered, sleek 3.5-metre-long island. Nothing so much as a knob, let alone a hob, interrupts its clean, elegant lines. The stainless-steel top, which serves as a table, slides back to reveal the sink and cook top. And Boffi's LT polyester black kitchen features floors and cabinetry finished in black polyester lacquer.

"The new finishes – ebony, graphite and black polyester lacquer – have a real depth to them," Italinteriors' Matteo Trevisan says. "You get an almost perfect reflection. It looks like black painted glass."

Even a white kitchen can use a hit of black. My client Elizabeth Frise had what she considered an ordinary kitchen in her Rosedale home: lots of white cabinets and a dark granite counter. I suggested brown-black walls (Pittsburg Paint #531-7 Black Elegance). She got over her initial I-can't-do-that response and soon called to say she had done it and loved it. "I don't know if it looks Paris or New York, but I'm thrilled. The colour upgrades everything. It looks classier, dramatic and exciting." This is not bad for a gallon of paint.

Another client, writer Roy LaPorte, took my advice and painted his ceiling black, something he says he never would have thought of doing. And now he's thrilled. "It strikes such a great balance," says LaPorte "between opening up the space by obliterating the ceiling, yet warming it up considerably."

"The entire top of the room recedes and opens up, so perhaps that's why people don't notice it immediately. Their eyes are tricked. But once we point it out, their jaws kinda drop, mostly in a good way."

Janice Lindsay is a colour and design consultant. 416-961-6281. www.pinkcolouranddesign.com



This model kitchen by Kohler, with its marble and ebony surfaces, is both simple and baroque.

Top to bottom: Jenn-Air's 30-inch free-standing gas range \$2,149, 30-inch floating-glass double wall oven \$3,849, and 36-inch French-door refrigerator \$4,199, all in black. www.jennair.com. Available at Appliance Canada www.appliancecanada.com.