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Tubs & Spas

Personalized Wellness

A focus on creating a spa-like refuge to enjoy at home increases demand for personalized heat and hydrotherapy solutions.

BY ELIZABETH RICHARDS

With health and wellness solutions for the home in the spotlight, soaking tubs, jetted tubs and saunas are in high demand. COVID-19 has increased the focus on personal wellness, and more time being spent at home is inspiring homeowners to accelerate the schedule for renovation projects to create the personalized refuge they desire.

“People have found, again, the value in bathing,” says Michael Kornowa, director of marketing at MTI Baths in Sugar Hill, GA. For a number of years, he adds, there was a strong movement towards showers, which are more convenient for daily hygiene tasks. “With this wellness movement, there has been a renewed appreciation for the benefits of bathing,” he observes.

“Fortunately, the trend for some time has been to turn the bathroom into a sanctuary of wellness and integrating more and more complementary and alternative care rituals in your day,” offers Erick Kristian, marketing director for BainUltra, based in Quebec, Canada.

Self-care and stress reduction are becoming higher priorities, Kristian adds, prompting BainUltra to promote an “End of Stress” campaign with Dr. Kenneth Redcross. “More so in the past year and continuing this year, the importance of taking just a bit of time each day for a personal wellness ritual can make a world of difference. The power of a Hydro-Thermo massage is transformational,” he says.

Demand for residential saunas is at an all-time high, adds John Gunderson, national sales manager for Americh in Woodinville, WA.



Aquatica Group's Baby Boomer 2 is a modern freestanding walk-in bathtub made from Aquatex, a proprietary solid surface material. A variety of systems can be fitted into this model, such as air jets, hydromassage jets, heater and LED lights.

aquaticausa.com



Americh has added Brass to its finishes for the Sawyer bathtub collection. The finish is actual brass, as opposed to just being metallic in appearance, and will patina over time. The acrylic tub interior is easy to maintain and clean, notes the firm. The tub is available in 71" and 64".

americh.com



Notable for its asymmetrical design with a wider deck along one side, the Cassandra tub comes as a soaker or air bath. Part of the Boutique Collection from **MTI Baths**, the tub is crafted from MTI's SculptureStone. The tub is available in white or biscuit with a choice of matte or hand-polished gloss finish.

mtibaths.com



TOTO's Flotation Tub includes Zero Dimension Technology, a zero-gravity state achieved with body positioning in the tub. To further deep relaxation, massage jets are placed strategically, and the Neck Spa, an adjustable pillow, increases stability while also releasing water.

totousa.com

“People miss using the saunas at their gym, so they want something to use at home,” he remarks. “Driving this is the health benefits of heat bathing and using the sauna several times a week.” While saunas in the bathroom are in demand to create the home spa feel, he notes they’re also being installed in other spaces, such as exercise rooms, garages, spare bedrooms or even outdoors.

“The bathroom is increasingly changing from its traditional form into a comfortably appointed room with an appealing ambience,” reports Tim Schroeder, president of Duravit USA in Duluth, GA. “As a corner version, bathtubs fit perfectly into the room, while as a freestanding option they become the center of the room and create a unique spatial effect.”

Freestanding tub options have been on the rise for several years, a trend that continues. Other top trends include an emphasis on personalized style and options, attention to accessibility, increased integration of complementary therapies, and interest in organic, natural materials. That’s according to manufacturers recently surveyed by *Kitchen & Bath Design News*.

ON THEIR OWN

Freestanding tubs continue to be in the spotlight this year. While some freestanding tubs are designed to accommodate therapeutic jets, soaking tubs are a more frequent choice, manufacturers say.



Inspired by the night sky, **BainUltra** has developed the Celestia 6233 soaker tub. Fashioned from the company's new FineStone solid surface material, the tub keeps the bath water warm, and the material is durable, light and color resistant, states the company. The tub features two integrated arm rests. bainultra.com



Nathie Katzoff's latest tub for **NK Woodworking & Design** is made from sapele mahogany with hand-forged steel 'tentacles.' The company offers a line of sophisticated wooden soaking tubs that are available in a variety of sizes and styles. nkwoodworking.com



Designed by Susie Atkinson for **Drummonds**, the Whitewater Bath is a reinterpretation of the classic cast iron slipper tub. It features curved, contoured sides and a gently raised edge, along with tapered feet. The tub is available in four bespoke finish options: painted, polished, primed or raw metal. drummonds-uk.com



Part of the Opus collection from **Fleurco**, the Cabaletta is a freestanding tub that has been designed to offer space and comfort with the option to add a deck-mount faucet. The tub is fashioned from high-quality acrylic. fleurco.com



The New Classic bathroom collection, designed by Marcel Wanders for **Laufen**, is a reinterpretation of classical styles using the company's Saphir-Keramik material. The tub, part of a full suite of products characterized by soft curves mixed with angular elements, is lightweight, with an ultra-thin profile. us.laufen.com



The Stella Freestanding Bathtub from **Jacuzzi Luxury Bath** delivers a soaking experience in a modern fixture. Available in white high-gloss acrylic, the tub measures 59"x31"x28.4" and features a contemporary chrome or white linear overflow drain integral to the tub. jacuzzi.com



The Onyx freestanding bath is part of **Valley Acrylic's** Canada 150 Collection, created to celebrate Canada's 150th anniversary. Fabricated in Canada from stone resin, the tub features a designated deck mounted faucet space and a comfortable backrest, and is available in a matte or gloss white finish. valleyacrylic.com



Devon&Devon has teamed with architect Massimo Iosa Ghini to create the Kalos bathtub. The body interprets the shapes of flower corollas, with the base representing the ripples on the water's surface. Made of White Tec, the tub can be specified in matte or glossy in one of 500-plus colors. devon-devon.com

"We see a diminished demand for jetted tubs and an increased demand for soakers," stresses Stephen Barry, CEO of Laufen USA in Miami, FL. "Bathrooms are getting larger to allow more room for freestanding baths and to serve as a restful sanctuary space, rather than a utilitarian space."

In the past five to 10 years, freestanding tubs have played a significant role in the bathroom industry, says Mark Wolinsky, president at Quebec, Canada-based Wetstyle. "People have been increasingly choosing luxurious freestanding designs over the traditional built-ins or jetted bathtubs," he reports.

The popularity of freestanding tubs is due, in part, to people recognizing that "the bath is the crown jewel of the bathroom," Kristian notes. "It is a centerpiece, a work of art. It brings aesthetic beauty, and nothing does that quite like a freestanding bath."

"Freestanding bathtubs have had quite a run lately," agrees Naomi Neilson, CEO and founder of Native Trails in San Luis Obispo, CA. "We can hardly keep our copper and concrete tubs in stock. With an unprecedented amount of time being spent at home during the pandemic, there is more demand than ever to make the home truly a sanctuary from the stress and challenges brought on by 2020. People tend to view a freestanding bathtub as a peaceful, relaxing element in the bath – and they want to take advantage of their extra time at home to enjoy that luxurious soak," she says.

BESPOKE BEAUTY

Design that allows customers to express their own unique style and taste is expected in the luxury market. Manufacturers say flexibility to personalize the space is essential.

"One of the joys we have as a manufacturer is seeing all the unique ways people love to customize their baths," says Kristian. "We offer a wide variety of ways to customize your tub, many collections, accessories and therapies you can build into your dream bath," he states. "When we introduced the Scala – a modern twist on the clawfoot bath – we offered a variety of new finishes, in addition to more traditional ones, like Matte Black and the popular Satin Brass."

"The new trends focus on achieving individuality through color and shapes," Schroeder remarks. Duravit teamed up with Sieger Design to create the Happy D.2 Plus that offers all these elements, Schroeder says. "The Happy D.2 Plus bathtubs with the exterior in Graphite Super Matte or White give this series of bathtubs the opportunity to personalize the ambience with a contemporary and elegant style."

A wide range of colors makes this individualization easy. "For us, the perfect color does not exist," Verdi says. "The perfect color is just the one our client wants. This is why most of our bathtubs and bathroom furniture are freely customizable in terms of color, and are available in over 500 colors from the NCS range."



Made of a sustainable cement and jute fiber mixture called NativeStone, the Mendocino Tub from **Native Trails** features a soft rectangular form, angular sides and deep interior. The tub's thick walls provide insulation that ensures a hot, deep soak that will last. The tub is a lighter weight than concrete and is available in four finishes: Ash, Slate, Pearl and Earth. nativetrailshome.com



The Lab Collection from Pierre Belanger and the **Wetstyle** Design Lab includes tubs crafted of WETMAR BiO, a non-slip, heat-insulating material available in True High Gloss, Matte and custom color finishes. Two different sized models - LAB 1 and LAB 2 - feature a backrest and spacious ledge. Shown is LAB-1, which fits in a 60" alcove. wetstyle.com



Designed by Christian Haas, the Bauhaus look of the Antheus bathtub from **Villeroy & Boch** reflects the style classics of the Modern age. The unique facet cut on the freestanding tub and stainless steel frame represents a diamond ring. Made from Quaryl, the tub is available in two sizes. villeroy-boch.com



Inspired by the beauty of Quintana Roo, Mexico, the Quintana Freestanding Soaking Tub was designed by interior designer Kara Cox in collaboration with **Thompson Traders**. The tub is handcrafted in copper and brass, and is available in Burnished Nickel and Satin Brass finishes. thompsontraders.com



Duravit's DuraSquare bathtub delivers minimalist style with a modern twist. Made from the cast mineral material DuraSolid, the tub showcases precise lines and a warm feel. Versions include freestanding, built-in or back-to-wall or corner for design and installation options. duravit.com



Designed with sleek sides and constructed from lightweight, durable acrylic material, the Arate Freestanding Bathtub from **Delta Faucet Co.** is easy to clean and maintain, notes the firm. The factory-installed integrated overflow and waste drain help reduce potential leak points and simplify the installation process, according to the company. deltafaucet.com



Consisting of a sculptural bathtub and two complementary sinks, the Musa Collection delivers minimalist style to the bath. Named for the nine Greek goddesses, Muses, the line's tub is crafted from **Graff's** exclusive Sleek-Stone material, which combines natural dolomitic minerals with resin. The tub is available in gloss or matte white finishes. graff-designs.com



Collaborating Workshop/APD, **Kallista** offers the Argile Freestanding Bathtub, crafted from a blend of mineral powder and resin that maintains the water temperature. The half-moon shape and raised pattern deliver a handcrafted feel with a textural gradient. The 72"-wide tub, available in Honed White, can accommodate two bathers. kallista.com

While white is still on top, the interest in other shades is intriguing buyers. "Although white is still prevalent, two-tone tubs are gaining in popularity," Barry says.

"After many glamorous years, it's now time to say goodbye to polished surfaces and lacquered fronts and welcome what is probably the most important bathroom trend of 2021: the matte finish," Wolinsky stresses. "We see that more people each year are choosing matte surfaces, with its tactile and warm-to-the-touch sensation and sophisticated look. We are also seeing increasing interest for natural classic colors such as concrete grey, slate and black," he adds.

While size is often dictated by available space, some manufacturers say they see a move towards smaller tubs. Barry says the trend seems to be "smaller is better" for freestanding baths, but adds that the interior bathing well must be maximized for comfort. "This is a driving factor in the 'thin-wall' craze, which Laufen has mastered for years," he stresses.

Federica Verdi, marketing manager for Devon&Devon in Florence, Italy, says there is growing demand for smaller tubs that are well suited to the small spaces of contemporary living. "Our customers do not want to give up beauty and comfort, but they want them increasingly declined to the extent of their spaces and their desires," she says.

For saunas, Gunderson states that flexibility to custom cut to any size room, as well as provide options in lighting, wood color and bench design, is an important trend. "The bathing experience is becoming more of a retreat space. Close the door to the outside world, shut down technology and take time to really relax and enjoy the benefits from heat bathing," he reports.

ENHANCING THE EXPERIENCE

Customized features, complementary therapies and digital solutions are all important in enriching the bathing experience, manufacturers say.

"Tubs with edges or bathtub racks on which to place objects, books or candles are increasingly in demand," Verdi says. "We have noticed a growing demand for comfort in domestic environments. Our customers ask for comfortable homes, with spaces where they can take care of themselves. And they want bathrooms that not only fulfill a function - they want a privileged place where they can enjoy a real sensory experience," she adds.

High-tech features such as voice command controls and smartphone applications add value to the experience, as well. "Digitalization of the shower, sauna [and] steam by way of voice activation and touchless control are growing in popularity," Barry observes.



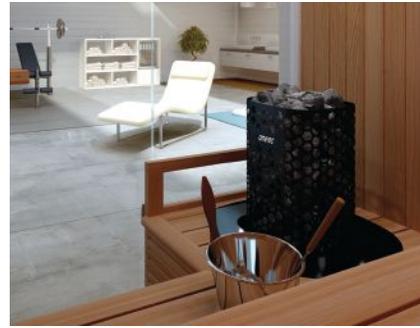
From **Hastings Tile & Bath** comes the Chelsea bathtub, a smooth, spacious fixture with contemporary contours delivering a transitional slipper tub-inspired design. Available in 60" and 66", the tub is available in a choice of four finishes: polished white, matte white, polished gray and matte gray. hastingsstylebath.com



Drawing on the Art Déco period, the Belshire Freestanding Soaking Tub from **DXV** showcases a unique faceted design with gently sloped interior for lumbar support and 16" soaking depth for comfort. The tub comes complete with fiberglass reinforcement and integrated drain and overflow. dxv.com



The Calma bathtub is carved from a single block of stone, available from **Stone Forest** with a honed or polished finish. Shown here is a tub carved from Marquina Taupe, a contemporary warm gray/brown marble with white veining that is quarried in Spain. The Calma can be made from various stone materials, such as Carrara marble. stoneforest.com



Amerrec's custom saunas can deliver the spa experience to the home gym or bath, notes the company. The SaunaLogic2 digital control with worldwide mobile app allows a smartphone to act as a second control that can operate the sauna from anywhere. amerrec.com



The Alamo Freestanding Bathtub offers endless customization of features, allowing the product to appeal to personal taste. Available in 58", 66" and 70", the tubs are made in the U.S. of **Hydro Systems'** HydroLuxe SS, and offered in the company's standard color options. They can also be color matched to fit a décor. hydrosystem.com



At home in a traditional or modern setting, the Winslow Resin Freestanding tub from **Barclay Products** features a versatile design. The 66"-long tub features an integrated overflow slot with a built-in overflow channel in the tub wall. barclayproducts.com



Sterling's Unwind collections includes three freestanding bathtubs. The line features a sculptural Oval Bath, a crisp-edged Rectangle Bath and a Back-to-Wall Bath that has an open back that offers a faucet deck. All three come in a 59"x30" model, and the Oval and Back-to-Wall Bath also come in 67"x32" models, with the Rectangle measuring 67"x30". sterlingplumbing.com



Contemporary meets comfort in the Studio S Freestanding Tub, according to **American Standard**. Coordinating with the Studio S collection, the tub features a seamless design, rounded lines and 17" soaking depth. The high-gloss finish allows for easier cleaning. The tub comes complete with adjustable leveling feet. americanstandard-us.com

In the sauna, WiFi mobile app controls that work with Siri, Google Assistant and Alexa are popular, Gunderson says. The app allows flexibility, such as turning on the sauna from the golf course, so it is ready when the user get home, he explains.

Virtual applications that control bath settings and therapies enhance the bathing experience, Kristian says. For example, he notes, the BU-Touch app created by BainUltra allows the user to activate the heated backrest before entering the bath, set preferred options in advance, and program the drying cycle from a distance if you forget to do so after a bath. "This is a really nice way to customize your bathing experience," he reports.

Integrated therapies, such as thermotherapy, light therapy, heat therapy, sound therapy and aromatherapy are also a growing trend, he adds. These compatible therapies working together amplify their benefits, he offers.

Kornowa agrees that combining sensory therapies with various types of water therapy is on the rise. "People are looking for a more complementary, well-rounded assortment of therapies that they can mix and match depending on their needs and their wants," he concurs.

He adds that therapeutic choices – including whirlpool, air jet, soaking, and the gravitation towards microbubbles – are made based upon specific needs. Chromotherapy has become a major industry, he says.

Using chromotherapy while bathing enhances the whole therapeutic experience, giving you "double bang for your buck," he offers.

MATERIAL THINGS

Manufacturers say materials are a key component in the decision process for consumers, who are looking for top quality and production. "Our customers greatly appreciate the investments in research and development of innovative materials," Verdi says. "This is demonstrated, for example, by the success of our White Tec Plus, an eco-sustainable material that combines extraordinary aesthetic quality, a surprising sensory experience and innovative biocompatibility characteristics. We are confident that this is not a passing trend, but an acquired and lasting sensitivity."

"Choosing the right bathtub is about much more than the actual shape: how it feels against the skin, its anti-slip properties, or how easy it is to maintain or install are also decisive criteria," Schroeder remarks. Duravit's DuraSolid caters to these needs, he says, and allows for new design possibilities. "Thanks to the Duravit material DuraSolid, the smallest details of Philippe Starck's design were realized: extremely thin bathtub rims, organic forms and gentle integrated curves," he adds.

Kornowa says people are gravitating towards organic materials and shapes. Their SculptureStone is a thin, 70% organic material that, when



The Delsia freestanding tub from **MAAX** is a two-piece tub with a symmetrical look and concealed seam, available in 60" and 66" sizes. The tub features ample deck space for faucet installation, a maximized bathing well, raised backrest and off-center drain. The bath apron is available in three colors: Aqua, Platinum Grey and Ruby. maax.com



Honoring the **THG Paris** tradition of design savoir-faire, Honore features a softly rolled edge and oval shape for an elegant look. Available in a variety of custom finishes, this freestanding bathtub is made of the company's MineralStone, and delivers generous dimensions and bathing basket. thg-paris.com



Victoria + Albert is offering a 60" bathtub line extension of its most popular styles – petite versions designed for smaller spaces. Included in the selection are the Amiata, Barcelona and Toulouse tubs. The tubs are available in Gloss White and Matte White, as well as RAL colors for the exterior of the tub. vandabaths.com



The one-piece siena acrylic bathtub from **Blu Bathworks** features a contemporary design with a white matte finish, with an integral slot overflow that contributes to its minimalist design. The tub is lightweight, and features four adjustable legs for level installation. Hidden underneath are anti-rust steel frames for extra reinforcement. blubathworks.com



Andaz – a round, solid surface tub from **Clarke Architectural** – features a spacious interior. An in-wall slot overflow is positioned high on the wall for a true soaking experience. The tub can be ordered in a standard matte white finish or a satin white finish, as well as gray shades of Whisper and Ghost in both matte and satin finishes. clarkearchitectural.com



Herbeau's Marie Louis 61" cast iron slipper tub is handcrafted in France, and features a white porcelain enamel surface that offers excellent heat retention, the company notes. The tub, available in 15 metal finishes, is shown with the Pompadour deck mounted tub filler/hand shower and freestanding adduction pipes in Polished Brass. herbeau.com



ThermaSol's Finnish-style custom-cut sauna kits and rooms are made with furniture-grade Western Red Cedar. Kits include pre-assembled benches and a pre-hung glass door, Finnish sauna heater and heater guard, Olivine rocks, wooden bucket and ladle, a thermometer and all hardware. thermasol.com



Drawing inspiration from Darius, the Persian king, **Maison Valentina** presents the Darian Bathtub, which was conceived using a range of production techniques and materials. The fiberglass tub features a cluster of gold-plated polished brass asymmetrical bars enveloping black synthetic leather. maisonvalentina.com

used, is like adding a sculpture to the bathroom, he notes. "People who like the finer things in life are gravitating towards SculptureStone."

"People are still purchasing the more organic shapes," he adds, with ovals – whether symmetrical or asymmetrical – being the most popular.

Neilson notes, "We are seeing tremendous demand for natural, organic materials and finishes." NativeStone tubs combine concrete with natural jute fiber, and their copper tubs are made from 100% recycled copper. "People are really identifying with these less conventional bathtub materials that create a strong sense of connection with nature," she observes.

When planning a luxury bathroom, climate protection, sustainability and zero waste play an increasingly important role, Wolinsky reports. "Quality and sustainability are gaining in importance, and we see a wider range of customers willing to pay higher prices for environmentally friendly materials," he says. Wetstyle's WETMAR BiO, a 2015 Green Good Design winner, is "an eco-friendly thermo-insulating composite material that displaces the petro-chemical additives in heavy use in the industry with a recipe composed of Mother Earth's natural ingredients – soy and mineral stone," he adds.

ACCESSIBILITY CONCERNS

Universal Design and consideration for consumers who are staying in their own homes longer is an important aspect of bathtub design. Heights

are being adjusted for easier entry and exit. Manufacturers are also finding ways to accommodate different needs while keeping the tub stylish.

"Recently, accessibility has become more of a concern in bathroom Universal Design," reports Barry. "Many tubs are being reduced from 21" or 22" in height down to 18" or 19". This trend isn't necessarily a factor in the luxury bath or freestanding bath sector, but it is abundantly clear in the alcove tub choices," he states.

"Accessibility and design have become an important attribute for the aging baby boomer generation. They want to stay in their homes longer, but still look for something that is on trend," Wolinsky observes.

"There is a demographic swing occurring with aging in place," agrees Kristian. "As the population ages, more and more people look to find products that help them live healthier lives at home. In terms of baths, we see a lot more drop-in or undermount installations being done for this reason, as it allows for easier entry and exit in the bath." Accessories cater to these needs, as well, he says, such as the armrests and grab bars BainUltra offers on most models.

Gunderson says ADA requirements should be considered for residential sauna room designs as people plan for aging in place. These requirements include a 5' turning radius for wheelchairs, as well as the size, location and height of bench construction. ■