



**HOMECENTER** Home & Garden Design

## Built-in fridges: Totally cool

High-end homes boast stainless steel, wine units, freezer drawers

11:36 AM CDT on Monday, September 24, 2007

**LISA MARTIN/Special Contributor**

If you're searching for a sign of luxury in a home, head straight to the kitchen and check out the refrigerator. If there's at least one built-in refrigeration unit, you're in a residence that can truly be called upscale.

"You cannot underestimate the perceived value of built-ins," says Mark Molthan, owner of Platinum Series Homes, which builds custom homes from \$500,000 to \$20 million in Dallas, Plano, Frisco, Carrollton and Rockwall.



### Sub-Zero

A kitchen in a showcase home features a built-in Sub-Zero refrigerator that is hidden in cabinetry. Built-in refrigerators are becoming expected in upscale housing.

"It's almost the key that delineates a typical tract home from a custom home. They have become that important," he says.

Built-ins have also become far more versatile. The first generation of built-in refrigerator-freezers arrived in the 1950s.

Today, everything from wine refrigerators to freezer drawers can be built into almost any room. Some have sleek stainless steel fronts; others hide behind custom panels that make them appear part of the cabinetry.

A kitchen may house just one built-in refrigerator, or it may have side-by-side and bottom drawer units. In million-dollar homes, you might find these appliances in multiples, as in one kitchen that Mary Kathryn Reese of Kitchen Design Concepts in Carrollton recently helped orchestrate.

The refrigerator-freezer was at one end of the huge room, so Ms. Reese nestled a coffee center with one refrigerated drawer and one freezer drawer in the kitchen island in the opposite corner.

“For families who are fresh-food eaters, I recommend getting a smaller freezer because they don’t need it as much and go for an extra-large refrigerator unit,” she says. On the other hand, “someone who’s a game hunter, who brings home meat that the family will eat, might want a very large freezer instead.”

Manufacturers include European companies such as Thermador, Gaggenau and Bosch, and U.S. appliance makers such as Sub-Zero, the manufacturer most often associated with built-ins, as well as KitchenAid, Viking and Jenn-Air.

“Dual refrigeration, which is exclusive to the Sub-Zero brand, means two evaporators and two compressors allow food to be preserved at the optimal temperature and humidity level,” says Karen Sanders, regional director of marketing for the Westye Group, the Sub-Zero wholesaler.

Says Mr. Molthan: “The biggest trend I’m seeing is that people are using these big refrigerators now almost as if they are pantries. It’s this whole growing notion of creating a freshness center, and it’s changing the way we design certain kitchens.”

Ms. Reese has also added built-ins to media rooms, wet bars and butler’s pantries.

And the trend may be trickling down. “You really start seeing more built-ins in homes that are in the \$400,000 to \$500,000 neighborhood, but in certain areas like Highland Park and University Park, it’s a huge asset for resale to say that you have a built-in,” Ms. Reese says.

“It’s almost the standard.”