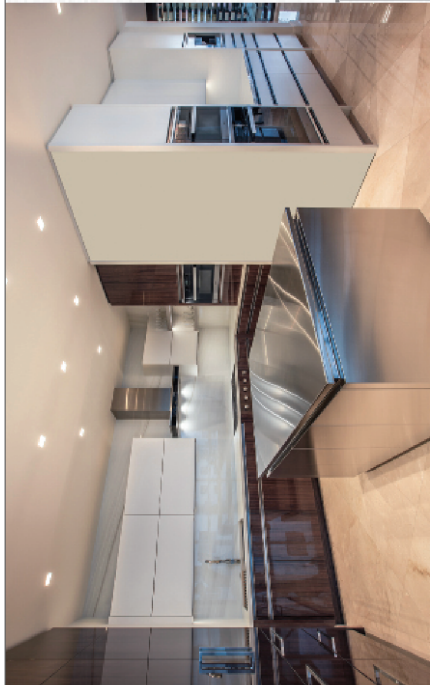




says Matt Riley, CEO at Thomas Riley Artisans' Guild. "They might feature brass-clad trim and wood interior panels."

PARITY IT. If you want to be in vogue, go beyond the pale. Deeper shades like chocolate are à la mode in northern climates, says Erin Otterbeck, vice president of operations in Naples for Allikristé Custom Cabinetry & Kitchen Design. Even so, grays and white belft coastal sand and surf, so they won't wash away soon.

"They remind me of driftwood from the ocean," says Hollenbaugh. Still, the dark browns that are popular up north have migrated south with some of his snowbird customers in the form of floating wood shelves, cabinets, and entertainment centers.

DEFINE IT. Teak "ribs" or panels from the ceiling down a wall define areas within an open floor plan. So do ceiling trays, which also can ramp up the drama of chandeliers. "How we treat the ceiling really defines the room," Hollenbaugh says.

Beams add country flavor to an abode, with today's versions leaning toward darker, rough-hewn looks. Regardless of hues, beams look best on high ceilings. Otherwise, they can bring down a house, making it visually claustrophobic. That's also why restraint is needed in the number of beams or trays. Mute or lighten up colors from below.

DON'T FAKE IT. If you want to be in fashion, invest in real hardwood floors over faux hardwoods of vinyl or tile. "The true beauty is hardwoods," says Cosen-tino. "No planks are alike, so it's like putting a piece of art on your floor."

UPDATE IT. Freshen up your all-white kitchen by adding honey and natural wood tones. Or go bold, as in the current trend of contrasting islands and tray ceilings with more than one shade or texture, says Otterbeck.

"We're doing a lot of contrasts, so most cabinets may be one color, with another color at the perimeter," she says. "We're seeing navy, black, and baby blues in kitchens and bathrooms. People are hav-



FAVORED WOOD TRENDS IN SOUTHWEST FLORIDA INCLUDE USE OF NATURAL TONES IN KITCHENS, DARKER CEILING BEAMS, WIDER FLOOR PLANKS, LIVE-EDGE TABLES, CEILING TRAYS, AND MIXED TRIM FINISHES SUCH AS STONE AND METAL.

inside," says Cori Gracium, owner of Sticks & Stones Collection. "Live-edge and two-toned wood consoles and tables are our best sellers right now. They're warm and welcoming."

PAIR IT. Mix things up. Use different materials—stone and metal trims, for instance.

"We're seeing wood, stone, and metal being integrated in vanities and cabinets,"



ing more fun and being more daring and courageous with color."

"Recently we did a kitchen island in turquoise," Hollenbaugh says, but the rest of the kitchen was in a neutral tint. The key is proportion. It's one thing to create a powder room in olive green, as one client did, and quite another to drown an expansive living room in a surprising shade, Otterbeck says. Chocolate vertical-grain cabinets work well between a light white-oak floor and a white ceiling with matching chocolate beams.

Whatever your options, besides asking, "What would wood experts do?" remember this: It's your house, your way. Make yourself happy, not the trendsetters. After all, you'll be living there—they'll only visit. <<

TIPS TO KEEP WOOD FLOORS BEAUTIFUL

1. By all means, clean your wood floors, but skip polish. "You simply need to clean wood," says Chris Coarantino, president of the Hadinger Company of Naples. First, find out the finish from the manufacturer to determine the type of cleaner needed. Then use a mop with a microfiber pad—not a broom, which could scratch the surface.
2. When cleaning, don't go natural. Vreagar can dull or erode finishes, according to the National Wood Flooring Association. Also, excess water can warp wood, so avoid steam cleaners and string mops.
3. Don't refinish floors unless they are solid hardwood. "Those are extremely rare in Florida, where most floors are 1/4 inch thick due to the weather," Coarantino says. The sole exception: Natural oil-finished floors may need oil replenished in the most trafficked areas.

