

Which Is Best? Stick-Built, Modular or Panelized?

Before I got into the real estate business and subsequently starting writing about housing, I had always thought that stick-built homes offered the best kind of construction in terms of quality and flexibility of design. I had felt that modular homes, or "pre-fab" as I called them, were a secondary choice with awkward layouts, dictated by the width of a cubicle designed to travel down a road on a flatbed.

After learning something about the differences between them, I now know that I had some woeful misconceptions about the two, and the term panelized, which refers to homes constructed from prefabricated flat panels, had not entered my vocabulary.

Which is the best kind of construction?

"Let's put it this way," said Bob Frissora, "if you're buying a new car, would you prefer that it be built in a factory or in your driveway?"

Frissora should know what he's talking about as owner of Arcanna Homes, a company headquartered in an historic building in Peekskill. For years he has built panelized homes, both modest and opulent, throughout the region and other states. Frissora prefers panelized construction to modular because he says it offers greater flexibility in the design process.

Panelized homes offer a product that is fabricated under ideal conditions in an



By Bill Primavera

efficient way, he said. Each worker at the factory has been trained to do a particular carpentry job and, through experience, has become an expert in that particular aspect of home construction. The state-of-the-art machines produce panels that ensure the home is built precisely square and dimensionally correct without room for human errors.

Advanced technology and a controlled work environment produce a more energy efficient, durable home resulting in a better, more inherently green

product.

"After the panels arrive at the site and we assemble them, there is very little construction material waste," Frissora said.

At the same time, Mother Nature is foiled because the panels of a house are connected and sealed within a day or two, free of the warping, mold, mildew and squeaking that adverse weather may cause when a home is stick-built.

"And, compared with modular homes, there is greater flexibility in the way a panelized home is finished once the basic frame is constructed," Frissora said. "The owner may choose to do much of the finishing work that



BILL PRIMAVERA PHOTOS
Bob Frissora of Arcanna Homes

would normally be done in a factory with modular homes, but this is not always the best course of action. If a client has family and friends who have committed to get the job done but don't show up when they say they will, the job will never get done. And if professional subcontractors are

hired to do the plumbing, electricity and tiling, the work is not necessarily coordinated in an efficient way.

If the subcontractors are all working independently, you have their schedules to worry about, not knowing if they consider another job more important than yours," Frissora explained. "And finishing up a home can have significant delays because of this."

Frissora said that with his turn-key projects, it usually takes about six weeks for the panels to be constructed at the plant and, with all the supporting work, from clearing the land to all the custom work, a house can be up in four to six months.

When I first heard the term panelized homes, I naively envisioned small four- or eight-foot wide panels like the sizes available for plaster board and fencing. But Frissora said that panels can be quite long, more than 30 feet and quite high, to accommodate a 10-foot ceiling. And there are even concrete panels with insulation for basement construction.

Because a regular modular home is delivered in pieces, as completed oblong sections, the maximum size of a room is limited by the width allowed on the roads and bridges leading to the site. That



A panel is hoisted into place on a construction site for a panelized home.

sometimes can produce the boxy "feel" of a prefabricated interior design. But more creative manufacturers and designers can produce a more fluid floor plan, although the double thick wall between sections has yet to be solved, if ever.

With panelized homes utilizing all flat panels, delivery is easier in that each numbered panel is stacked side by side on a flatbed.

"The bottom line in choosing to build a panelized home is a more consistent construction schedule and greater flexibility in design," Frissora concludes.

To learn more about panelized homes, Bob Frissora can be reached at 914-788-0700 or visit his company's web site at www.arcannahomes.com.

Bill Primavera is a licensed Realtor® (www.PrimaveraHomes.com), affiliated with Coldwell Banker, and a marketing practitioner (www.PrimaveraPR.com). For questions or comments about the housing market, or selling or buying a home, he can be reached directly at (914) 522-2076.

The (Very) Long Reach of Our Forebears' Diet



By
Nick Antonaccio

The USDA recently issued its updated dietary guidelines for a healthy lifestyle, which I summarized in last week's column. The focus is the current American (Western) diet which, as a reflection of our entrepreneurial spirit and ambition, is focused on immediacy and efficiency, as compared to the laid-back Mediterranean diet, which is focused on the appreciation of food and the intrinsic, interwoven role of wine.

An anthropological review provides a roadmap to the evolution of these divergent diets.

The human body has evolved very little over the last 40,000 years. It was "designed" for a specific diet, one that was readily available at the time. Think about the diet of early homo sapiens: berries, root vegetables (each a complex or good carbohydrate), nuts, fermented juices, wild game and a mastodon steak once or twice a year.

This diet prevailed for millennia but then, as the population grew, along came cities and the need to feed the masses. Agriculture—principally processed grains (simple, bad carbohydrates)—became a primary source for food, a divergence that was not in humans' DNA.

As the Industrial Age dawned and infiltrated our lives, so too did the commercial food industry, notably in the United States. Scientific applications and additives were introduced to preserve and extend the "shelf life" of raw food. Not coincidentally, commencing in the mid 20th century the incidence of cancer, heart disease and obesity began to rise to near epidemic levels. Through all of these changes, wine remained a healthy, unadulterated staple.

Until recently, Americans were uniquely impacted by the rise in life-threatening diseases. The USDA has addressed these issues but they didn't have to look far for a solution. Mediterranean-rim countries have resisted what the Americans have succumbed to. Their diets more closely resemble a diet for

which our physiology was designed: a balance of unadulterated, minimally processed proteins, fats and carbohydrates, lubricated by fermented juice.

There is a strange irony in this tale. Americans, introduced to the "French Paradox" 20 years ago, have begun to slowly change to a more Mediterranean focused diet. The rest of the world, however, has begun to succumb to the ubiquitous Western diet. As American capitalism has expanded across the globe, there has been a rise in overly processed foods, coupled with an increase in the consumption of fatty foods (hamburgers and super-sized French fries) and sugary soft drinks. For example, historically the incidence of heart disease in Japan and France was minor compared to the United States.

This all changed as American food manufacturers expanded to these countries over the last quarter century. Today, heart disease has become a major concern in these countries as well as other "globalized" nations that have embraced the Western diet.

