



THE CUTTING EDGE

The hottest trend on the design horizon is for personalised spaces – fads are no longer part of kitchen design

WORDS CLARE PATIENCE

The kitchen has completed its evolution from poky, functional space to the heart of the home. Open-plan living has thrust the humble kitchen into the spotlight, changing the way we cook, eat and interact within the space. Colour, cabinetry and design are less about a pre-packaged, one-size-fits-all solution and more about adding to the liveability of your home. Read on to discover how to create a kitchen that works for you and your family.

Colour coordinate

Love a sense of drama? Then you'll be right at home with the seductive black-gloss look that's filtering down from high-end design. The next step on from the stainless-steel look, black is powerful and adds an element of surprise. Introduce it with high-gloss black cabinetry, or choose black ovens, tapware and dishwashers.

For a subtle look that's at peace with open-plan living, a gentle wash of neutral colours will connect the cooking zone with the rest of the living areas. Forget that stark, clinical look and think 'warm and inviting'. In line with the rise of eco chic, raw finishes, warm materials and timber

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are becoming popular choices, adding a sense of comfort and timeless appeal. "There's an increase in the use of natural timber in kitchens – or even materials that look like natural timber," says Michael Kitchener of Kitcheners Kitchens. Timber-look laminates, like Laminex Designed Timber Veneers, have a consistent grain which works in most modern spaces. "We're also seeing an increase in natural marble and granite benchtops with a matt honed finish," says Michael Kitchener of Kitcheners Kitchens.

Better benchtops

Benchtops are becoming more personalised. Standard kitchens allowed for 900mm bench height, but talk to your designer, as 1000mm can work better for taller people. Benchtop thickness is now an important design element, with thin slivers of stone challenging the chunkier slabs we've seen in the past. "With forged stainless-steel, polished concrete, Corian and reconstructed stone, the edges can be built up to any thickness by adding an apron," explains Marianna Cseh from A La Carte Design. Add a sense of lightness with floating benchtops, which range in thickness from eight to 20mm, and appear to be suspended in the air.

TOP RIGHT Venture to the dark side with glossy black cabinetry. **LEFT** Floating benchtops add lightness to bulky kitchens. **OPPOSITE** Create an individual kitchen tailored to your lifestyle.





LEFT: For on-trend cabinetry, include handles on floor units but not wall units.
ABOVE: Fingerpull drawers are user-friendly and ergonomically sound. **TOP RIGHT:** Innovative pantry shelves mean no more reaching around in the back.
RIGHT: A sleek tap creates a focal point.



Innovation

More than any other room in the home, the kitchen is a hotbed of technological innovation, and there are countless time- and energy-saving products to make your kitchen more user-friendly. The trick to avoiding costly investments is to evaluate what will really enhance your day-to-day living.

1. OVENS & COOKTOPS

Induction cooktops score a big tick for energy efficiency. Not only do they use 20 to 50 per cent less energy than electric or gas cooktops, they provide a greater sense of cooking control. Offering fast heating as well as safety functions, they are a fantastic option for families. Just be aware that you may need to upgrade your cookware, as the base must be made of a ferrous metal, such as cast iron, steel or iron.

Steam ovens are another worthy investment, as they dramatically reduce cooking time. "A built-in steamer reduces the number of cooktops you use and produces healthy meals," explains Marianna Cseh of A La Carte Design.

And why not take advantage of the range of self-cleaning ovens on the market? Pyrolytic ovens heat the oven up to 500 degrees, effectively incinerating food residue. Another option is a steam-clean oven, which heats water in a tray at the bottom of the oven, softening grime and making it easier to wipe clean.

2. CABINETS & DRAWERS

With the kitchen now 'on show' as part of the living area, clunky cabinetry is out. Soft-close drawers are top of most kitchen wish-lists, and understated handles or finger-pull

drawers are in line with the streamlined look. Says Michael Kitchener, "I'm a fan of the combination look – no handles on wall units but handles on the floor units. My favourite handle is the skinny rectangular variety in a brushed nickel finish. These handles don't have ends that stick out to catch trousers."

Drawers and lift-up cabinetry are fast replacing cupboard doors. Ergonomically speaking, they're the best choice, plus they cut down on kitchen waste, as you don't lose food to the back of the cupboard. A pantry with independent drawers or pull-out shelves means you'll never have to get on your hands and knees to reach to the back of the cupboard. New technology for wall units allows hinges with lift-up mechanisms. This means no more taking a step back to open a cupboard door – just lift!

3. RUBBISH DISPOSAL

One of the most useful changes you can make to your kitchen is to incorporate recycling bins into the design. Stow multi-bin organisers for paper, tins, organic matter, glass and rubbish under the sink, and you'll be halfway towards reducing your waste disposal. It'll certainly make recycling night easier.

4. TAPWARE

Your kitchen tap is one of the hardest working pieces in the home, so it's worth investing in a quality piece. Single lever mixers add sculptural appeal, and include the added versatility of an extractable shower nozzle. Taps by Gessi and Franke have innovative temperature-controlled LED lighting: turning red for hot water and blue for cool, they're a must for homes with small children. **HM**



PHOTOGRAPHY (TOP LEFT) TONY OWCZAREK (TOP CENTRE) GAP PHOTOS (INSIDE - S. CLEMENT, STYLIST C. MAMET. (TOP RIGHT) OLIVER BEAMISH (COVER (BOTTOM RIGHT) GORTA YUUKI (OPPOSITE) MAREE HOMER

MODERN MAKEOVER The latest kitchens feature a mix of materials, like marble and stainless steel alongside timber finishes and laminate cupboards and doors, which allows them to seamlessly blend with open-plan living zones; check out the range of Laminex cupboard doors and finishes at www.laminex.com.au.

With the kitchen NOW
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