



COUNTRY PLUS *Convenience*

With wish list in hand, Rowena and Alan Clarke set about designing their dream kitchen, which was then realised with custom-made perfection.

Story by Zoe Liddy Photography supplied by Kitcheners Kitchens



TOP: Rowena loves the space the vast laminate benchtops afford her as well as their "soft blue" colour that picks up the blue on the wall. "I didn't want granite for the benchtops as it looked too hard and wasn't in keeping with the style," she says.

ABOVE: Who doesn't love the element of surprise in a kitchen? Behind the satin-finish timber facade lies three corner drawers that alleviate the problem of hard-to-reach spaces at the back of cupboards.

Amid the dust and debris of the renovation process there's always the frisson of anticipation about what will be waiting at the end of it all. For the Clarkes, extending and revamping their Australian colonial weatherboard cottage in Sydney's north gave them the opportunity to put in a new kitchen with conveniences they could only dream about, given the restrictions of their original one. Style-wise, they wanted a modern take on the Australian-country look – lots of timber for a colonial feel, but with clean lines and no clutter. Finding the right builder for the job, however, proved somewhat difficult as most were shifting their focus to building more contemporary creations. "We wanted a kitchen that had an alcove with a mantle like they used to have over old fuel stoves," Rowena says. "We had about five or six companies visit us, but in the end we picked Kitcheners Kitchens because the salesman was the only one who understood what we were after."

STARTING AFRESH

Rowena laughs when she recalls their time in the kitchen before the new one was put in. "There was no space to have a big fridge so we had a little one plus eskies all over the place. My children used to joke that we were getting the renovation done just so we could have a bigger fridge!" They solved the space problem through their larger house renovation, which involved removing the closed-in verandah and cheap 'add-ons' that were tacked on over the years. But they've started again with a fresh extension – including a merbau deck with French doors that link to the open-plan living areas, where there's a relaxing ambience. "With the hallway right down the middle there's always a cool breeze coming through," Alan says. This airy feel is further enhanced by ceilings which are a bit over three metres high, so they're perfect for lofty additions like the step-in pantry.



FINE FORM

The timber cabinetry, with matching kickboards, is beautifully finished in antique satin and accented with brass knobs, giving the kitchen a pleasing uniformity of style, and the rich tones are lifted by the colour above it. "I love the look of pale blue with dark timber," Rowena says. "It went on the wall a bit darker than I had expected but I think it looked fine in the end." In their decision to focus on one primary material, Rowena and Alan allowed the timber's richness, both in colour and grain, to take centre stage. Aside from a couple of sentimental touches, they kept the space clutter-free – just the way they like it. "I love those traditional country kitchens but I don't know how they keep them clean!" Rowena laughs. "Our grandkids are also an influence as far as decorating goes," she adds. "We like to keep it all open as you don't want to yell at them not to touch ornaments." Two glass-fronted cabinets with lace curtains that match the fringing on the windows create interest, as does a row of patterned blue and white tiles that punctuates the patch of cream ones on the splashback. "I didn't want to overdo it," she says. "I just wanted them to be nice and plain so they didn't take away from the timber." The room's centrepiece – a mantle with elegant corbels – conceals the rangehood, and in the middle of the room is a laminate island benchtop with a Coolum Flint finish and timber edging. Kitcheners used dynamic space principles to incorporate eight different sets of self-closing drawers, including the corner ones which the pair loves. Their quirky design alleviates the problem of tight, unusable corners, maximising the available space for storage. Rowena's Tupperware and cookbooks are all within easy reach. "The kitchen was so much a part of what we were doing with the house that not having it all in place as we imagined it would've been upsetting," she says. "Kitcheners was great," she adds. "It was all done in a couple of days. The installer was a jolly fellow and a hard worker;



any hiccups and he was right on it." For Rowena and Alan, the gentle family bustle has happily resumed again, but now there's a lovely big space to enjoy it in. "The kitchen has always been the hub for us," she says. "We're just lucky to now have one large enough to accommodate all these anklebiters!" ■

ABOVE LEFT: A utilities cupboard with a convenient roller door hides practical items like a kettle or toaster to maintain the kitchen's clutter-free look.

ABOVE RIGHT: Kitcheners expertly dotted the i's and crossed the t's while building the Clarkes' kitchen. Now, Rowena and Alan have just what they were after – a beautiful design, lots of cupboard and bench space, and plenty of room to welcome loved ones to the heart of their home.

KITCHEN ESSENTIALS

Kitchen built by Kitcheners Kitchens
 Tiles – Tilecraft in Waitara
 Paint – British Paints Duck Egg
 All appliances are Whirlpool stainless steel, except for the Westinghouse dishwasher
 All fittings from Recollections
 Flooring – Blackbutt timber