

1. NATURAL ELEMENTS

Concrete is the element that bridges the gap between minimalism and a softer aesthetic. Teamed with slabs of timber and expanses of white cabinetry, it manages to look both rugged and urban. "We are seeing a chunky, natural look in many kitchens," says Michael Kitchener, of Kitcheners Kitchens. But he sounds a note of warning: at something like 100kg of mass per square metre, concrete is heavy. If considering using it for your kitchen benchtop, make sure your cabinetry is properly supported to take the weight.

IDEAS GALLERY

TODAY'S KITCHENS AND BATHROOMS DEMONSTRATE A NEW DESIGN FREEDOM THAT SEES STYLES RANGING FROM URBAN CHIC THROUGH TO CHARMINGLY RUSTIC WORDS **JULIA RICHARDSON**



2. SMART STORAGE



3. ISLAND LIFE

2. SMART STORAGE

According to the experts, there's something of a 'wardrobe mentality' emerging in kitchen design. The idea is that the working parts of a kitchen can be concealed behind closed doors – like the shelves and racks of a walk-in wardrobe. Getting kitchen storage custom designed is ideal, of course, but if you're relying on modular products, be sure to do a thorough stocktake of your storage needs first.

3. ISLAND LIFE

For some room styles, island benches are receiving a more delicate makeover. As a result, they are less-overpowering – more like freestanding pieces of furniture, complete with recesses for dining leg-room. Karine Lim, of Rogerseller, explains that this new-found refinement tends to be focused solely on the island; its proportions are often contrasted with the thickness of benchtops elsewhere in the kitchen.

4. PERFECTLY FORMED

The positioning and orientation of island benches are now design priorities. More often than not, islands are styled as preparation areas, complete with sinks, and located where the cook can face out towards the living areas. Because of their exposure, the on-display mixer taps are valued as much for appearance as performance. Reece's Belinda Geels describes them as "the kitchen's new statement piece". →



4. PERFECTLY FORMED

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5. CHARACTER BUILDING



6. CREATIVE THINKING



7. FASHION COLOURS

5. CHARACTER BUILDING

There's only so much room for frivolity in a busy kitchen, but according to Karine Lim, of Rogerseller, there's a trend towards splurging on a few spectacular pieces to add character. Michael Kitchener, of Kitcheners Kitchens, cites Elica's 'Star' rangehood as an example: it's like a huge mirror ball. More commonly, though, the feature piece is a statement accessory, like the Autoban/De La Espada's 'Double Octopus' chandelier shown here, available from Spence & Lyda.

6. CREATIVE THINKING

Industrial-style kitchens are making way for something more domestic. Nikki Page, of Winning Appliances, notes a growing demand for appliances that are either white or black instead of the once-ubiquitous stainless steel. In the kitchen shown here, the look is quite eccentric: cabinets clad in vintage grocery tins are a nod to the rural surrounds of a country house designed by Melbourne's March Studio.

7. FASHION COLOURS

Increasingly, interior designers are following the trends set by the fashion industry. Right now, catwalks and showrooms are dominated by textured materials like linens in weathered shades of warm grey and mossy green. That same palette is popping up in kitchens, too. Colour is in evidence but, as shown in this kitchen, the tones are casual and organic. →

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