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A WELL DESIGNED KITCHEN

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A WELL DESIGNED KITCHEN

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It's a fact - people tend to gravitate towards the kitchen when you throw a party (because that's where the booze and the food is...). But it's also worth recognising that the kitchen is where much of the drama surrounding everyday life tends to take place in your home - it's not just a space for cooking and eating (although these things can be dramas in themselves, particularly if you are a terrible cook or have very young children).

Kitchens have become the social hubs of our homes. A place for social gatherings, chatting and having coffee with friends and family, playing with our

children and animals, doing homework (and music practice - although soundproofing may be required...) and where household admin gets sorted (or left in a really big pile for months and months and months, or maybe that's just me...).

Before we get to the expensive bit, it is worth recognising that to enable all of these activities and to be able to accommodate the workspace that these things demand, a large and practical family kitchen table is an absolute must! At a minimum, the kitchen table is a place where everyone can sit down and eat together, but it also acts as the essential gathering place for the family to complete many of the activities listed above.

Beyond the table, kitchens are one of the major areas of expenditure in the home. Even the most basic kitchen storage costs money... surface and finishes can also be very expensive and that's before you consider the question of investment in appliances and equipment. So, irrespective of your clients' level of culinary expertise or their interest in cooking, it needs very careful planning ...and being perfectly honest, effective planning matters much more than size when it comes to creating a functional and workable kitchen space. That said, you can obviously do much more if you have a huge kitchen space, but I remember having a very functional kitchen in my first home in London - a titchy one bedroom flat in Maida Vale!

The 'work triangle' concept was developed in the 1950s and established the ideal position for the cooker (hot area) the fridge (cold area) and sink unit (wet area) It



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provides guidance on the optimal distance between these three points so that work is carried out not only efficiently but also as comfortably as possible. The recommended overall distance on adding up the three sides of the triangle is 6m with no two points being less than 90cm apart.

The basic principle of the ‘work triangle’ applies to most kitchens irrespective of size. The application of the ‘work triangle’ results in a number of basic kitchen layouts:

1. Single Line - arranging everything along one wall, you will need at least 3m of wall space. This works well in narrow and restricted spaces (think flats and studio areas)
2. L-Shaped Layouts - arranged on two flanking walls, or one of the arms of the L can act as a spatial divider in an open-plan area
3. U-Shaped Layouts - offers the maximum amount of storage and working space
4. Gallery Layouts - with cupboards on the facing wall, which also suits narrow and confined spaces
5. Island Layouts - ideal for inclusive, sociable kitchens. Some of the main kitchen functions are located on the central workstation

A good way to create additional space for a large family oriented kitchen is to absorb adjacent rooms or areas into the kitchen (such as the dining room or a utility space) or extend a short way into the garden, either to the side (the famous ‘side return’) or to the rear, or both if you are lucky enough to have sufficient outdoor space!

If your clients’ are fortunate enough to already have a generous family kitchen it means their children (and other family members) are more likely to congregate in this space and, as a consequence, they become more familiar with routine domestic tasks (most of which take place in the kitchen) - they may even be persuaded to help with food preparation and washing up (but perhaps I am being overly optimistic in this respect...). This being the case, it is worth bearing in mind that the kitchen is a family space and should be designed as such - I doubt you are trying to recreate the type of industrial kitchen space that you would find in a restaurant (although these are quite popular in modern apartments and bachelor pads, even if seldom used to their full potential)... so, while practicality and usability is an absolute must, this principle applies equally to everyone who will be using the space and must also reflect all the things your clients’ plan to do in their kitchens.

Stating the obvious, but it is also a good idea to locate the kitchen where you have easy access to outside (this is often the case anyway) - this means that on fine days, even the most basic of activities that are usually completed in the kitchen can spill into the outdoors - this includes but is not restricted to; food preparation, cooking (BBQs) and eating.

Below are a few examples of kitchens that I love...



(Image from Architecturaldigest photo by Robert Rufino)

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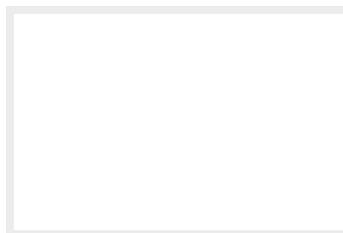
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(Image from *For My Home* by Jami Goldsmith)



(Image from *Style Files*)

As I said, kitchens can be expensive, but they are one of the most frequently used and abused spaces in your home. It's also worth bearing in mind that spending as much as you can on storage (good quality hinges and handles, etc.), workspace (stone if possible) and finishes (good quality tiles and paints) can extend the lifetime of your kitchen. I am sure that the 'trusted estate agents' would agree that a well designed kitchen can disproportionately increase the value of your home...

Jane Price-Stephens runs her own Interior Design business, to find out more visit:

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