

in the KNOW

Make the most of your kitchen with our expert design tips, layouts and plans, and renovation lessons learnt

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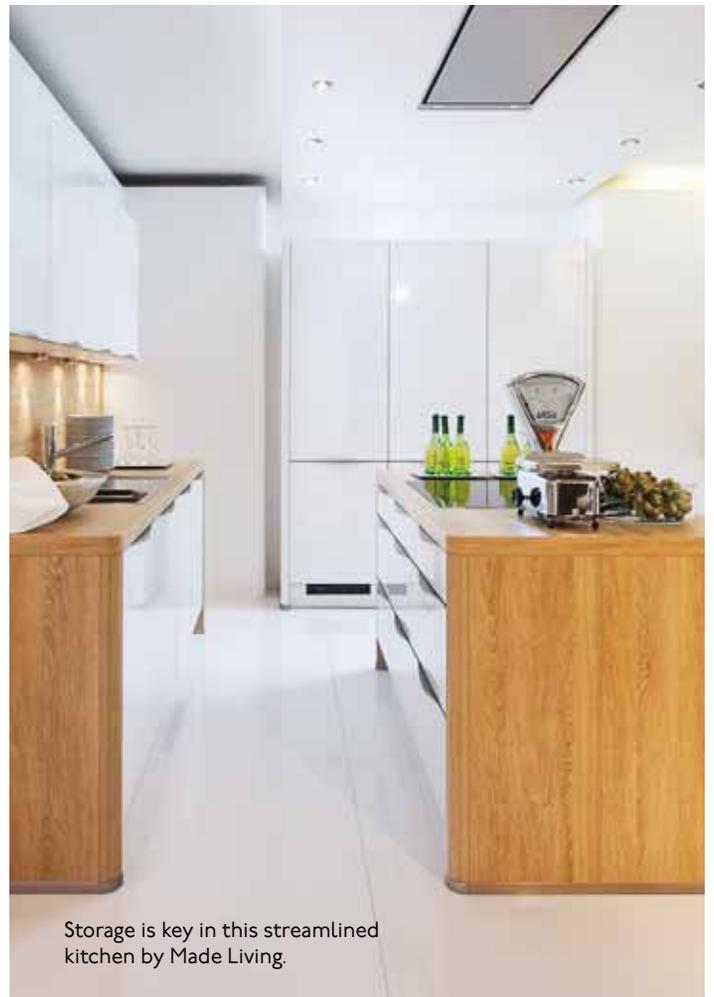
Before you whip out the sketch pad and start fantasising about the perfect island bench, take a moment to think carefully about just how your new kitchen will be used. Is one person the sole cook or does the whole brood like to muck in and get messy? Do the kids do their homework at the bench or is that where you like to showcase all the latest gadgets? Friends and family may treat the kitchen as their home away from home, but can the space be easily transformed for your more swanky occasions, such as dinner parties and work functions?

If you've just bought, spend time in your existing kitchen, chipped surfaces and all, before the demolition team arrives. Living in the space first will give you a feel for the room's natural flow, and help you figure out what works and what doesn't in the existing layout. Be realistic about your home's current design aesthetic: the dream kitchen you crave may not successfully translate to your own home.

"I was INVOLVED IN THE DESIGN PROCESS AS I WANTED MY KITCHEN TO SUIT THE WAY I ENTERTAIN" ~ SIMON JOHNSON, PROVIDORE

LOVE YOUR LAYOUT

The basic concept of the 'working triangle' – where the sink, oven/cooktop, and fridge are all within easy reach of each other at three points of a triangle – has been at the heart of kitchen design for decades, and the principle still applies. As a guideline, make sure each unit is no more than three metres apart for easy access. However, the way we use the kitchen has changed – it has become a more multifunctional space, meaning that more than one or two people could be using it at the same time. If your kitchen experiences high traffic, consider creating different work zones for prep, cooking, cleaning and dining. "Proper allocation of these zones will shorten the distance you travel, streamline your workflow and make everyday activities quick and easy," says kitchen expert Darren James of Interiors By Darren James. The most vital thing to consider is what works for you and your lifestyle, and to design your kitchen accordingly. >



Storage is key in this streamlined kitchen by Made Living.



LIGHT UP YOUR LIFE

The secret to a luminous atmosphere in the kitchen is the successful mix of natural, task and mood lighting. Install downlights above the prep and cooking areas (above) – there’s nothing more dangerous than trying to use a knife in dim light – and consider illuminating the bench with under-cabinet lights for an atmospheric glow. “LED lighting is a great solution as it’s less harsh than halogens and creates a wonderful mood,” says Liam Murphy of Art of Kitchens. Dimmers are great for eating areas and if your kitchen lacks natural light, consider a skylight or a window splashback.

EYE FOR DETAIL

Your kitchen design may focus on functionality but it’s the details that personalise the space. Serious entertainers could consider a drinks fridge in easy reach of guests (right), and a second freezer is a godsend for thrifty cooks who like to plan ahead. If budget permits, a pair of slimline dishwashers can work well in busy households, with one dispensing clean crockery and the other loading dirty dishes! Bulky benchtop appliances, such as coffee machines and water filtration units, can be seamlessly integrated into cabinetry. “If space and budget allow, a separate scullery for appliances, and a second sink or fridge are luxuries that are well worth having,” says interior designer Caroline Bury of Bury and Kirkland.

top tip

“It’s possible to sell your old kitchen if it’s in good condition,” says Liam Murphy of Art of Kitchens. “There’s a big market for second-hand kitchens and you can get good money for them.” Go to secondhandkitchens.com.au or ebay.com.au.





WHO'S BEST FOR THE JOB?

Whether your kitchen needs a small renovation or a major rebuild, who you choose to do the job will ultimately impact upon the cost, the quality and the finished product. For the budget-conscious, a **flat-pack kitchen**, such as this Ikea option (above), offers exceptional value and quality at a wallet-friendly price. Keep in mind that most flat-pack kitchens won't suit awkward spaces, and the range of finishes and colours available is often limited. You'll also need qualified tradies to fit the electrics and plumbing, and unless you're a particularly handy DIYer, you will generally get a better result if you use a carpenter.

For a more personalised design, consult a **kitchen design company**. Their in-house designers can be a great source of ideas and are adept at solving problems such as fitting units into an awkward space. Many manufacture their own products, which can then be custom-fitted to your space. They'll guide you through appliances, colours and finishes, and provide trusted tradespeople for any plumbing or electrical work.

Hiring an **architect or interior designer** will give you complete freedom of design – ideal for perfectionists or design aficionados who can afford to splash some cash. They'll not only make you think twice about your space, they'll also offer design solutions to problems you didn't know existed. >

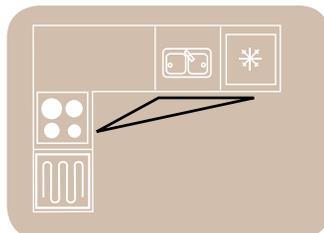


"I prefer a lot OF STORAGE SPACE AND SMALL 'HIDEY HOLES' IN A KITCHEN. I LIKE A CLEAN UNCLUTTERED BENCH WHERE YOU CAN PREP AND DRINK WINE WITHOUT TOO MANY THINGS BEING AROUND" ~ MARTIN BOETZ, LONGRAIN EXECUTIVE CHEF

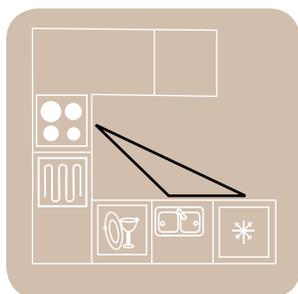
design darlings



The galley kitchen has all the appliances and cupboards positioned along two opposite walls. You can have entry points at both ends but as this increases traffic, a wider corridor is a must. This design allows for maximum storage space in a smaller area.



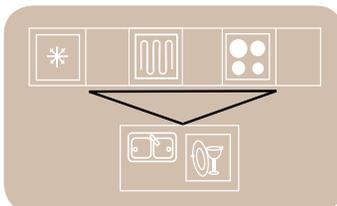
The L-shaped kitchen spreads the workspace along two adjoining walls. The fridge and sink are usually positioned on one wall and cooktop/oven on the other. This works well in long, narrow rooms. A central bench or table (above) can be added if space permits.



The U-shaped kitchen boasts a workspace area running along three adjoining walls and allows for easy positioning of activity zones. Consider installing open shelves on upper cabinetry, instead of cupboards, to prevent the area from feeling closed in.



The single-line kitchen runs along one wall, with appliances positioned under the benchtop and storage cupboards above to optimise bench space, great for smaller spaces and open-plan rooms. This design particularly works well with an island.



 SINK

 STOVE

 DISHWASHER

 FRIDGE/FREEZER

 OVEN

COST CONSIDERATIONS

You get what you pay for, and the final cost will depend on the amount of cabinetry you need, whether you choose cupboards or drawers, how complex internal fittings are and so on. If you choose imported appliances, you may have to wait several weeks for delivery so you will need to plan well ahead – there may be a delay between your units and benchtops being installed, particularly if you have chosen a composite or stone top that needs to be measured exactly in the space and custom fitted.

Flat-packs are the budget option. Usually you buy just the appliances and cabinetry, and organise the fitout yourself, but companies such as Ikea offer a design and fitting service. Remember to factor in extras like wiring, plumbing, tiling, flooring and lighting.

A kitchen design company will be more expensive but will be able to provide a fairly accurate quote at the design stage. They'll organise everything, saving you time and trouble, and some will sort out tradies too. Make sure you get them to include variables such as finishes, benchtops, appliances, fixtures and fittings in the quote.

Architect-designed kitchens are not for the cash-strapped. Much more time is usually spent in the design phase and any unusual additions will increase the period – and cost – of the build. If the kitchen is one part of a full renovation, there could be savings to be made by having tradespeople coming in only once. 

