



‘As we love to cook and entertain, having a kitchen that feels like it’s part of the living room and not cut off from the entire house is what we were after’

## KITCHEN TALK

How do you configure a kitchen to make it work for you? In the second of our two real life kitchens, a stylish cooking and eating area is created from an awkward space

### Modern Country

Although their home, dilapidated when they bought it, was renovated to make it fit for the 21st century with high volume, open-plan spaces and tall slim windows, fashion designer Carla Grima and her husband Sebastian Ritard did not want an ultra-modern style kitchen. ‘As it’s an old house, for us it needed to be a rustic type of look,’ says Sebastian. ‘We also wanted it to be really open because we spend a lot of time in the kitchen. We enjoy cooking - and eating!’

For Forward Architects, who remodelled the entire house, the kitchen brought a few challenges. The room is sandwiched between floor-to-ceiling windows and an eye-catching floating staircase on two sides, and open-plan to the living room area on the third. ‘This meant there was very little wall space and we needed to incorporate all kitchen necessary appliances and utilities and maximise storage in a creative way,’ says Daine Pranaityte Micallef from Forward Architects.

The first stage of solving the problem was giving the one solid wall almost entirely over to storage with a floor-to-ceiling unit. Within this is the sink with cupboards below, one of which contains the dishwasher. The tall cupboard to the left holds the refrigerator.

Above the sink are a pair of shelves in iroko, incorporating a draining board and lighting in the lower one, and more storage for every day items in the upper one. Using the same wood as the stairs neatly links the spaces, as well as being a contrast to the blue/grey, for a more visually interesting look. Above the shelves are more cupboards, these flush with the ceiling ensuring every last centimetre of space is used. ‘For top cupboards we used Georgian Wire Glass panels. It is a more traditional material, however in the context it feels modern but still follows the client’s brief for a country house kitchen feel,’ says Daine.

The second stage of creating a great-looking but functional kitchen was the very large island which, because of the space available, works as the heart of the kitchen and a connection to the living and dining area. Within the island are the hob and oven, as well as more storage in the form of drawers, cupboards and niche shelving. ‘When planning a kitchen, it is important to think about functionality - it is important that the refrigerator, the sink and the hob and oven work together fluently as a triangle,’ says Daine. ‘Other, but no less important issues are a working surface and storage.’

The island worktop is in white lava stone, from Mediterranean Ceramics, as requested by Carla and Sebastian. ‘We wanted to experiment with as many natural materials as possible,’ explains Carla. ‘The volcanic stone is a terracotta colour naturally, but when glazed and given heat it creates a beautiful crackled effect. We selected white because the crackling effect turns a greyish colour which matches our concrete floor and we find it a fresher look than marble. It also does not stain, as marble does, with citrus or turmeric etc and it can take any temperature - so perfect for hot pans.’

At the far end is a breakfast bar, also in iroko. ‘As the clients entertain a lot, it was important to give the island a fluent function, from a space to prepare food and cook, to a centrepiece when guests are over,’ says Daine.

Above the island is a suspended shelf in raw steel from which are hung pots and pans - a modern take on the rack found in the traditional country kitchen. ‘The kitchen is a happy medium between modern and country,’ says Daine. ‘Traditional objects such as the steel rack have been interpreted to have simple modern lines, and materials such as Georgian Wire Glass, brass and glazed lava stone in combination with solid, straight-edged iroko wood, work well and have a more modern feel. The blue-grey colour of the units is an earthy tone that complements the rest of the interiors without standing out.’

For Carla and Sebastian - and now baby Olivia - the kitchen is just what they wanted. ‘It’s open-plan heaven, which is how the entire house has been designed,’ says Carla. ‘As we love to cook and entertain, having a kitchen that feels like it’s part of the living room and not cut off from the entire house is what we were after. The little breakfast bar on the end is perfect for having a friend over for a glass of wine and chat whilst we are cooking... or to place little Olivia close by whilst we are making breakfast. All the natural light coming in also enlarges the open-plan design.’

‘We hated the clutter of pots and pans in our previous apartments, so the structure above the island was what we had been longing for, giving us easy access and avoiding that awkward stacking of pots and pans. We thought the height of certain storage areas would be a disadvantage, but we quickly found a solution by storing items that are not often used and also by buying a little wooden step stool which stores perfectly under our windows.’

