



'WE ARE ALL INFLUENCED  
BY THE THINGS WITH  
WHICH WE SURROUND  
OURSELVES'



THE KITCHEN IS NO LONGER JUST A UTILITY ROOM BUT A SPACE TO ENJOY AND PUT ON DISPLAY. SALES OF APPLIANCES AND KITCHEN FURNITURE ARE BOOMING, AND GROUNDBREAKING DESIGN IS THE ORDER OF THE DAY. **HELEN CONRAD** LOOKS AT WHAT'S ON THE MENU.

# Kitchen think

Recent years have seen some exciting developments in the kitchen. Once off-limits to all but the most expert amateur chefs, designers are working hard to transform the most undervalued room in the house into a stylish and functional space, packed with labour-saving devices.

Whether seeking home comforts with a nostalgic feel or craving luxury in the most modern of surroundings, the boundless possibilities of today's kitchen design make even the wildest of kitchen dreams a distinct possibility, as well as bringing some of the most challenging techniques within the grasp of the home cook. With modern appliances closer than ever to ensuring perfectly cooked meals at the touch of a button, designers are working to incorporate state-of-the-art equipment while at the same time making the kitchen one of the showpiece areas of the home.

## Looking to the past

Established for nearly 25 years under his own name, kitchen designer Mark Wilkinson's latest range has been commissioned by the British National Trust. Wilkinson devised the furniture through months of research in the National Trust's archives, as well as visits to various National Trust properties. Painted in oyster, with rose and wheat accents, the National

Trust kitchen has a traditional look, with beaded doorframes, forged brass hinges and monkey lip handles enamelled in oyster. But the traditional appearance hides a kitchen cleverly equipped to suit die-hard cooking enthusiasts. There is a free-standing larder with shelving unit and side to side sliding trolley, and an American Wolf stainless steel range cooker.

A newly designed stainless steel extractor has also been designed to complement the furniture. The island unit is designed for food preparation, with an integrated weighing scale set into the Noir St Laurent granite worktop, and close to the maple preparation top there is a waste chute, also set into the granite. The work prompted Isabel Saiz of the National Trust to remark: 'We are greatly impressed by his commitment to the skills of traditional British craftsmanship and design and his ongoing desire to base his company on sound environmental principles.'

Wilkinson has created another kitchen that is more modern in appearance but still drawing inspiration from materials like glass, wood and stone. The Madison kitchen features crisp glass and brushed stainless steel, with chocolate-toned natural walnut. Glass panels are deep etched on their undersides, set into simple walnut frames with cabinet interiors lined with sycamore. Clean lines are guaranteed with handles for drawer and wall units hidden in the frames and a glass and oil mechanism designed to make doors slide open and shut with ease. Floor-level lighting aims to create the illusion that the furniture is floating above the floor. The kitchen also features a backlit glass-fronted larder and a glass-topped dining table lit from below. Wilkinson explains his approach to design by saying: 'We are all influenced by the things with which we surround ourselves; I believe that we should exercise the same degree of caution with our surroundings as we exercise in the choice of our friends.'

#### New kitchen concepts

Kitchen specialist Poggenpohl has recently fitted 105 apartments with luxury kitchens in a new 53-storey Manhattan tower. The company premiered its +INTEGRATION planning concept in Germany last year. The philosophy behind

+INTEGRATION is to transform the kitchen into a communication hub, a space for living in and receiving guests, a home office and more. Martin Gill, managing director of Poggenpohl UK, claims it redefines the architecture of kitchen and living spaces, blending crisp, uncomplicated continental detailing with cutting-edge technology. The aim is to create a harmonious marriage of form and function.

Gill feels open plan is definitely the way forward for kitchens: 'A more informal lifestyle has resulted in the kitchen dining area becoming the hub of many houses, with family and social activities taking place concurrently within a large space rather than separately in small rooms. This European-influenced trend will continue to evolve with the space incorporating not just dining but living areas as well, to include entertainment centres, desks and soft seating for relaxation.'

Furniture has been designed to show off multimedia elements, integrating home entertainment concepts. Telephone and internet access is included, and functions can be controlled by laptops, PDAs and programmable infrared remotes. The range employs unusual proportions, with a colour scheme of black, grey and white, with Swiss pearwood veneers, aluminium and glass.

Poggenpohl's latest range, PLUSMODO is the result of a year-long collaboration with world-renowned Spanish furniture designer Jorge Pensi. It combines the opposing elements of open and closed functional areas. In addition to fully extendable base unit drawers, it features large pullout trays underneath thick worktops, which extend on hidden runners to add additional storage space.

By adding a clear glass top, the trays become display cabinets where china, saucepans and utensils can be presented. Concealed, handleless drawers are embedded into the worktop, which is available in both mineral composite and laminate finishes. Lighting is incorporated within the satin glass and aluminium shelving of the wall storage above and behind the satin glass and aluminium splash back, along with overhead light to provide optimal illumination for food preparation areas. The splash back also houses hanging rails for utensils, light switches, timers, speakers, a radio, and, above the hob, a concealed extractor that draws steam and odours through a small horizontal top vent.

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Tall-unit blocks also feature sliding doors and incorporate illuminated satinised glass shelving to create both atmosphere and light. The idea is to display everyday objects glittering works of art with clever uplighting. PLUSMODO is available in Mineral White and Titanium Grey, and a new colour, Aqua Blue, will be available from next year. For those with a preference for wood, there is also an elm veneer.

Pensi says: 'In developing PLUSMODO, we wanted to introduce elements that had yet to be incorporated into kitchen design. This led us to explore light, sliding doors, open trays, and the concept of coexisting and flexible concealment and display components.'

Gill believes the new design will be well received: 'Early indications suggest that PLUSMODO will prove very popular in the UK and Europe as a whole. It's an extremely practical concept with exceptional styling, so it will appeal greatly to the design-conscious homeowner seeking a successful combination of form and function.'

Gregory Phillips Architects is another practice with a history of designing high-class interiors. Its credentials include victory in last year's Design and Decoration Awards in the Best Contemporary Residential Room category. Gregory Phillips Architects has also received the Salisbury Civic Society award for a sensitive modern annex to a nineteenth century cottage for fashion magnate Ray Kelvin, the man behind the Ted Baker label.

Gregory Phillips himself says he has noticed a move towards very large kitchens, well stocked with equipment. He says: 'Having one or two dishwashers



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and a couple of ovens seems to be a growing trend.' The practice recently fitted out a kitchen in Kew in London with an Imperial steam oven, Boffi units, an integrated Miele cappuccino machine, a Subzero fridge freezer, tables and chairs from Viaduct, and flooring from Kirkstone Quarries. Phillips says the owners of the Kew kitchen later reported that they use the equipment all the time.

Woods also feature in a luxury kitchen designed by British Interior Design Association and International Interior Design Association-accredited designer Cecilia Neal. A designer of 18 years, Neal likes to create bold *mises-en-scene* in her interiors, using colour and *trompe l'oeil*. All of the Newcastle Furniture Company's 'couture' kitchens are crafted from solid wood, with oak, cherry and maple the favourite materials.

The company, established 25 years ago, uses traditional parallel motion drawing boards to create a finished result which is truly bespoke and custom made. As a result, the Newcastle Furniture Company can work to a wide range of briefs and is often commissioned to design kitchens in city and country houses belonging to the same owners. Once a designer has been chosen and the style of the kitchen has been decided, a range of technologically advanced equipment is available to ensure its owner will get maximum use from his or her new facility.

#### Customise your kitchen

The Miele DG4060 steam oven takes precision cooking a step further, with 150 auto programmes and 30 individual programmes available in 23 languages. Preferred cooking methods can be saved and called up at the touch of a button. A timer means the oven can be programmed to prepare food for a particular time, and food will be kept warm for another 15 minutes after cooking has finished. It also defrosts, reheats, blanches, stews and sterilises. In fact, according to Miele, steam cooking has been found to be far superior to traditional methods of cooking in terms of taste, texture, colour and nutrients.



Miele's 4000 series of conventional ovens employ the same technology, calculating the appropriate function, temperature and cooking time for the dish. All the owner has to do is select the food type from a menu of 54 types. The ovens will even prepare food to a preferred level of crispness or browning and prompt you when it is time for basting as well as recommending which shelf position to use. Baking uses sensor controls which measure the oxygen content and vapours, and the oven display advises when the cake or loaf is ready.

In August 2004, Miele launched the world's first built-in coffee machine using the exclusive NESPRESSO system. NESPRESSO produces premium coffee in hermetically sealed capsules. Colour coded to suit different tastes, it offers 12 blends for different palettes. The ovens are designed using simple lines to create a clean and uncluttered look. Miele aims to offer enough possibilities for individuals to customise their own kitchens, so single, double and combination ovens, steam ovens, plate warmers, and microwave ovens are also included in the range. □