

Navigate your way to the Perfect Kitchen and Home Renovation

***IF YOU ARE CONSIDERING A RENOVATION
MAKE SURE YOU READ THIS EBOOK!***



***CONTAINING USEFUL HINTS AND TIPS –
IT IS FREE AND AN INVALUABLE!***

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As with any major purchase or investment, it pays to do your research first. The following is intended to help with the fundamentals, and to answer the common questions you might have.

To begin, let's look at the components of today's kitchen:

Appliances

Apart from your individual kitchen space, your choice of appliances is the next most influential factor determining the kitchen. The selection of an upright stove over a wall oven is an obvious example.

Look at the functions of each and determine that all your requirements are met.

Cook Tops

Usually selected to compliment a separate oven, cook tops can be Gas or electric fuelled. Gas is renowned for its quick response to control changes, so it is favoured by most professional chefs; however Ceramic electric Hobs particularly those with induction elements are very responsive, rivalling gas, with the advantage of easy cleaning and maintenance. Common sizes are 600mm and 900mm in width. Where bench space is limited, 600mm may fit best though the more generous sizes allow for pot handles and reduced congestion.

Ovens

Many of today's ovens are designed to fit either under bench or to be wall mounted. Multifunction ovens are capable of Baking, Roasting, Convection and Fan grilling using a combination of upper, lower and fan elements. Most quality manufacturers and retailers offer demonstrations to help in understanding how they operate. Common sizes match those of Cook Tops: 600mm and 900 mm. Where possible, wall mounting is a more comfortable installation, allowing easy access with a minimum of bending.

Upright stoves

Some available would be at home in the finest restaurants, but more basic models are an inexpensive alternative to separate oven and cook top. Common disappointments are that spills can fall down back and sides as they are not sealed in to the bench top. Sizes cater for all possibilities from 600mm and are often multi fuelled: Gas hob combined with an electric oven.

Range hoods

Extraction of heat, steam and odour is provided by the hood. Performance is expressed in cubic metres of air per hour moved. Hoods can be mounted below cabinets, integrated or hidden within cabinets or as canopies become a strong visual feature of the kitchen. All formats have built-in lighting and can re-circulate air back into the room via filters, if not ducted to the outside atmosphere. Ducting into a roof or ceiling spaces is in contravention of building codes.

Sinks

The sink and tap are the most used appliances in the kitchen. Once fitted a change is very disruptive so the right choice is vital. Most are still Stainless steel, but there are other materials available including Corian, Porcelain and enamelled steel. Choose from Single bowl, Double bowl or a combination of differing sizes with or without draining boards. They can be over mounted or sub mounted into the bench with a polished aperture. Waste outlets to the rear of the bowls puts the plumbing is closer to the wall, saving space in the cabinet below. Low cost self rimming over mount sinks are made by pressing the sink from one piece and are therefore limited to about 145mm deep. They usually have a rolled edge which creates a gap for foreign material to gather. A better self rimming sink will be made using a deep drawn bowl of around 200mm depth and a laser cut edge which seals neatly on the bench top.

Dishwashers

Modern dishwashers use less water and energy than you would use doing the dishes manually! The popular size is 600mm, although larger and smaller sizes are available. Finishes are white enamel and Stainless Steel but some models can be fitted with a door matching the kitchen for an integrated look.

Microwave ovens

Found in most kitchens nowadays, microwaves are a companion for your main oven, or, as a combo, an alternative. Microwave trim kits give a neat built-in appearance.

Steam Ovens

Steam ovens are gaining more popularity for cooking vegetables, rice, and fish etc using steam. They are also capable of reheating dishes or keeping them warm without drying out.

Refrigeration

Unlike most other Kitchen appliances, refrigerators come in a variety of sizes and formats. There are single door, two doors, side by side, pigeon pairs and more recently the French door. Start with function and size required; consider space for frozen goods and the occasional large platter for entertaining [an advantage of the Double width French door]. Consider also the depth as some may protrude too far from the wall. Chilled and filtered water and Ice dispensers are an alternative to bench fitted water filters. For a discrete appearance, some can be fully integrated into the kitchen scheme.

Having made you decisions regarding appliances, next consider the cabinetry and worktops.

Cabinets

There are two main construction techniques in use today: Carcass or Exposed frame.

The carcass is a modern cabinet construction method where a box type structure of melamine surfaced or laminated particleboard is created with doors hung on concealed hinges. Quality carcasses are built with solid backs and tops to seal and strengthen, and are supported with a separate plinth of a material able to cope with ingress of moisture. Plastic adjustable feet popularized by DIY kit manufacturers are unable to cope with the load of heavy benchtops such as granite and stone. It takes only a small amount of compression to cause cracking in brittle

stone tops. Colour matched 2mm ABS edging that blends with the front colour is used to obscure edges between doors. Shelving is usually adjustable for convenience, sealed on all edges and secured with an anti tip device. A quality custom manufacturer will be able to create cabinets varying in all three dimensions to fit a given project requirement. Precision in dimension is critical, only advanced equipment can produce carcass components to meet the precision required.

Exposed face frame or “joinery” construction is a traditional method akin to fine cabinet furniture. The fronts and frame are constructed with solid timber which is clear finished or hand painted. Creating this style of kitchen successfully is the domain of highly experienced craftsmen.

Doors

Doors, drawer fronts and panels for the vertical surfaces. Substrates are solid timber or MDF [Medium density fiberboard]

Solid timber doors are made with a frame of rails and stiles with a centre panel. As timber is prone to dimensional change, the panel movement is absorbed into the frame. Timber can be stained and clear finished, or hand painted.

MDF doors are surfaced with melamine, laminate, timber veneer, polyurethane lacquer or Vinyl membrane.

Melamine is the most economical and as with laminate must be separately edged with matching material, ABS plastic or PVC. For a contemporary look, aluminium frames can be used.

Veneers are finished with lacquer in satin or high gloss. Melamine, Laminate and Veneer doors are flat, having no relief to their design.

Polyurethane is a hard two pack sprayed finish similar to an auto finish that can be applied to flat or relief doors. There is total flexibility in colour choice and gloss level. This finish has emerged as the most popular finish in recent years.

Vinyl membranes often referred to as 'vacuum formed' are a low cost way of achieving the look of a polyurethane door. However they are heat and light sensitive so their appearance can deteriorate quite rapidly.

Drawers

Added access to the cabinet volume is achieved by the use of drawers as an alternative to a conventional cabinet. Other than traditional storage of cutlery and utensils, modern drawer systems can be used to store cookware, bench top appliances, crockery and provisions. Drawers can be much larger than previously available and are capable of loads up to 70kg. Full extension means that articles at the rear of the drawer can be accessed without having to rearrange contents at the front. Optional dividers and organization accessories are available to enhance facility. Soft closing provides effortless quiet closing which is a welcome feature in today's open plan environments.

Interior Fittings

Clever space systems are available to enhance access in cupboards particularly in corners. These include carousels, moving corners and the recent and revolutionary "Le Mans". There is a large selection of waste/recycle bins, vegetable storage baskets right through to the humble tea towel rail. Narrow pantry units can be equipped with pullout systems to overcome the common problem of small cans and packets being lost in the back of seemingly too deep cabinets.

Other operational systems include bi-folding, sliding, lift up and rollup mechanisms for appliance cabinet access or hidden laundry areas.

Benchtops

Flooring aside, no other surface in the home is subject to more torture than the kitchen benchtop! Your selection of benchtop material is usually a balance of practical performance, cost, maintenance and appearance. The choices include:

Laminate

Conceived for this specific function, laminate is an ideal work surface combining impact and scratch resistance with easy maintenance, a wide selection of contemporary colours designs and textures with comparative low cost. However being a sheet material, it requires more joins than other alternatives which may not meet the desires of those after a designer look.

Solid Timber

Often realized in laminations of 20-30mm strips to form a bench top of desired dimension, solid timber has a warm appeal particularly where a natural feel is required. Maintenance is generally high as oiled or polyurethane finishes can wear down or be damaged with use. Away from wet areas, timber tops can be an ideal surface for snack bars, attached tables etc as the warmth of timber is unmatched by other materials.

Stainless Steel

A popular choice for commercial kitchens, Stainless steel is finding a home in domestic environments to meet particular themes. It has low porosity and is easy to clean but prone to scratching and bruising which can detract from its fresh, new appearance. Quality fabrication provides for seamlessness and/or fully integrated sink bowls.

Granite

An igneous rock, granite is extremely hard and of medium porosity. While dark colours will disguise their absorption of oils and fats etc, light colours may show stains. A sealer is required to minimize absorption and needs to be reapplied periodically. As a solid material, edges can be finely sculptured with a minimum of joins.

Marble & Limestone

Marble is ancient fossilized limestone which can be polished to a mirror shine, or honed to a matt finish. Softer and therefore prone to scratching and with high porosity, marble and limestone are not considered the province of a busy family kitchen; however their sheer beauty will tempt those with a desire for a luxury finish.

Engineered stone

Manufactured largely from quartz, and with properties similar to granite but with the advantage of lower porosity. A safer choice than granite particularly in the lighter colour spectrum, colours are created to meet current trends. Fabricated by stonemasons similarly to other natural stone tops, brands include Caesar stone and Essa Stone.

Solid Surface

High tech acrylic man-made surfaces such as Corian and Freestyle have been developed to meet all the criteria of an ideal bench top. Low porosity, easy clean and easy removal of minor scratches means these surfaces can look as good in twenty years as they do when first fitted. Joins are almost invisible, freedom of shape cannot be matched by any of the alternative choices and sink bowls can be fully integrated. Although referred to as surfaces, these materials are homogeneous allowing undetectable repair in the event of severe damage.

Splashbacks

Choices include Ceramic, Porcelain or Glass Tiles, any of the bench top materials listed above, however laminate is not appropriate behind cook tops due to its combustibility. Over the last decade sheet Colour backed glass has gathered popularity due to its high fashion appeal and lack of grout lines which are notorious for grime collection. Where there is a lack of natural light, light coloured Splashbacks combined with under cabinet lighting will reflect light back onto the worktop.

Lighting

A good lighting plan for the kitchen should meet task requirements and introduce drama to the décor. Choices include Halogen, Fluorescent and LED. Fluorescent will provide the highest level of task light economically, while halogens soft clean light provides the drama. LED has extremely high candle life and low energy consumption although the output is lower. Lighting should be designed to give minimum shadowing in the main task areas.

Design

Start with the desired theme or design style. This may be dictated by a classic chimney, features like plate racks and book shelves or conversely a streamlined minimalist design. An experienced designer will approach the design differently for the same space depending on the overall look. Consider the space to determine the basic footprint of the kitchen. Your room may suit any of the basic: Galley, L Shape, U shape, Island, or a combination.

Next consider the positioning of the main appliances being aware of tasks and traffic flow. Relocating services is generally possible and the extra cost is often offset by an improved layout. The concept of the work triangle is that the sink, cook top and refrigerator, form a triangle of [ideally] equal sides, a combined length of no more than a total of seven metres and have deviation of no more than 300mm. Refrigerators should have easy access for the cook and other members of the household. Sinks need surrounding workspace and good light. Cook tops and ovens need good access for the cook but sufficiently remote to render them safe from inquisitive children. Where ducting of hoods is a factor, placing cook tops on outside walls provide the most direct and efficient ducting particularly when there is a second storey above preventing vertical ducting. Preparation space needs to be close to sink and cook top but extra prep space for 'helpers' should not affect the main cook's work flow. Most microwaves are only available with hinging on the left. Therefore, bench space to serve the microwave is best to the right. The shelf height for the microwave should cater for all those who use it. Dishwashers should be positioned without conflict with access to detergents and crockery storage while the dishwasher door is open. Waste and recycle solutions need access for the general household and also convenient to the preparation area

Now look at the storage of crockery, cutlery, utensils and provisions. Logically, these should be close to the areas

where they are used. If your kitchen has corners, you will have to consider access to the space below. One of the interior fittings mentioned above may be the solution. Larger elements such as refrigerators, pantries and wall oven towers have less impact on the spacious feel of a room if they are grouped together.

Of course the above information gives only some basics. It is not intended to displace the importance of a design professional, but to help understand the dynamics and disciplines employed. It is always recommended to engage a professional designer. Quality companies will provide their expertise as part of their overall package of services.