



A MODERN CLASSIC

A striking mix of dark wood and white acrylic doors makes a bold modern statement in this period property

PHOTOS JAKE FITZJONES STYLING SHANI ZION WORDS LARA SARGENT



A clever balancing act of curves and straight lines, this open-plan kitchen effortlessly fuses the dramatic tones of richly stained oak veneer with glossy white Parapan. The door through to the room behind is 'invisibly' hidden with a matching wenge front



Often it's assumed that the smaller, postage-stamp sized kitchen poses the most problems for the designer or architect. And while it can take every trick in the book and every last ounce of creative know-how to squeeze in all the much-needed gadgets, storage and design flair – a large space can present a completely different set of challenges. Take the ground floor space of Patrick and Anya Ahern's home. Their new home – a spacious, five-bedroomed period

property in north London, had been broken up into a number of apartments since the 1940s. The couple were keen to restore the handsome dwelling back to a single family home.

'Although the house was built in the 1880s, we wanted a contemporary style of kitchen with clean, modern lines, curves and high quality materials which would still be sympathetic to the classical feel of the property,' explains owner Anya who, like her husband, works in finance. The dilemma was how to devise a blueprint ➔

KITCHEN PROFILE

How to create a contemporary, timeless kitchen within the architectural bones of a period property was a key challenge facing Patrick and Anya Ahern. Part of a complete renovation which involved turning the property from a series of carved-up flats back into a family home, the angular and rather uninspiring ground floor space has been ingeniously converted into a striking, light-filled and welcoming kitchen packed with technology and brilliant storage. Streamlined, handleless doors in a mix of dark stained oak and creamy white Parapan look like beautiful pieces of furniture while a curvaceous larder unit and sunken wine cellar are stand out stars of the scheme.

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Kitchen designed in conjunction with Stephen Fletcher Architects.

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Above The slick, white Opticlear glass splashback by Richard Cox at Glassology is made from 6mm toughened low-iron glass which doesn't have the pronounced green hue of normal glass. It is back painted in white. An undermount stainless steel sink creates an uninterrupted line on the worktop. The delicate handblown Floral glass pendant lights by Louise Bradley add a subtle accent of Amethyst

Far left Handleless drawers open out to reveal solid oak drawer boxes with tailor-made storage for cutlery and cooking utensils

Right A modern take on the Victorian pantry—the curvaceous larder unit opens up to reveal masses of ventilated storage for dried goods





'We all agreed to echo the organic shapes planned for the garden landscaping within the interior'

that is at once welcoming and works in a period setting, yet is design-led and coolly minimal. This kitchen needed to be pitched just at the right tempo: too modern and this entire lower ground floor would stick out like a sore thumb.

After a recommendation from their architect Stephen Fletcher, who was instrumental in bringing the whole house together, the Aherns called on bespoke kitchen company, Mowlem & Co. Just a few meetings in with Mowlem's design director Jane Stewart, and it was clear that the client-working partnership fused into a strong,

cohesive and creative design vision. Mowlem & Co is known for its classic, custom-made and built-to-last kitchens and this is exactly what the Aherns wanted.

'Our main challenge was to incorporate the soft curves the client had requested into a property that by nature was quite angular,' adds Jane. 'We all agreed that it would be aesthetically pleasing to echo the organic shapes planned for the garden landscaping within the interior, so the circular floor-fitted wine cellar and curved larder became important focal points.' Extending this floor by another →

Above When closed the curved larder becomes a luxurious monolith of rich, velvety wood. The particular tone of the wenge stained doors was painstakingly matched to the adjacent stair treads to ensure continuity

Right The glass-topped sunken wine cellar, created by Spiral Cellars, is a dramatic feature. The watertight, cylindrical system is sunk into the ground and can keep up to 1,900 bottles in perfect storage conditions – just like a traditional wine cellar





Above The kitchen is kitted out with an impressive range of lighting including the trio of beautiful handblown glass pendants by Louise Bradley which echo the colour of the bar stools

Right The American-style, stainless steel fridge-freezer is surrounded by more storage including a pull-down tambour door to stash small appliances

third, the Aherns hankered after a spacious, open-plan kitchen diner – a fluid, all-in-one space for eating, relaxing and entertaining – with great swathes of floor-to-ceiling glass opening directly onto the garden. Every last finish, fixture and fitting has been carefully considered, and the striking combination of rich, deep-stained oak doors and creamy white Parapan (a tough, glossy finish acrylic material) creates an impressive balance of material, hue and texture. Indeed, the rich ‘wenge’ stained oak was meticulously colour matched to echo the dark wood floors throughout much of the house, while the cool, reflective Parapan doors, pale taupe coloured worktops,

in a 30mm thick man made quartz, and simple white walls maximise the natural light, keeping the north west facing room as bright and airy as possible. ‘We also wanted a lighter stone floor for this reason,’ recalls Anya, ‘but it also needed to be suitable for outdoors as we wanted to use the same stone for the patio area as well.’

With every aspect of the kitchen tailor-made to the Aherns exact requirements, the canny mix of open and closed storage is a real coup here. There is ample space behind the handleless cupboards and central island, while the American-style fridge-freezer is wrapped with beautifully-crafted wenge cupboards which meld invisibly



into a 'secret door' leading to the cloakroom and hall. Then there is the bank of low-slung white units topped by geometric cubbyholes (ideal for displaying books and ornaments) injecting just the right hint of laid-back kitchen-living. 'Designing the display and storage area was a mathematical joy,' enthuses Jane. 'We had to ensure all the alcoves were the correct dimensions and work to conceal the structural columns and natural recesses of the building.'

Perhaps the real star of this kitchen – and Patrick's favourite feature being an enthusiastic cook – is the impressive curved larder unit which sweeps around the end of the kitchen and into the space where the stairs ➔



lead up to the next floor. Offering a modern twist on the traditional Victorian larder, this beautiful piece of furniture is properly ventilated, thanks to ducting set into the floor, to keep dried goods fresh. The couple love to entertain so the kitchen had to incorporate an impressive line-up of top-end appliances and includes an ingenious sunken wine cellar. 'It was much cheaper than digging out a conventional cellar and can store more than 1,900 bottles,' smiles Anya. 'And it looks great with the glass top. The entire kitchen is a joy to use. We live in it.' And it's easy to see why. ■

Above Open storage neatly houses the Ahern's wide range of books on food and wine while the end cupboard is topped by a wall-mounted TV

Right A sleek built-in Gaggenau gas hob is complemented by the toughened glass splashback in Oyster White and the handleless creamy white Parapan doors to create a clean look to the cooking area

STOCKISTS INFORMATION

APPLIANCES

BO251 single stainless steel oven, £2,438; BS271 combi-steam oven, £3,155; VG295 90cm gas hob, £1,936; WS262 warming drawer, £641, all Gaggenau. SPC1100 built-in extractor fan, £847, Westin Design. G5191SCvi fully-integrated dishwasher, £930; G4570SCvi fully-integrated slimline dishwasher, £920, both Miele. NR-B53V1XB side-by-side refrigerator, £1,599, Panasonic. KWC Inox stainless steel mixer tap with pull out hand spray, £769, KWC. Boiling water tap, £940, Quooker.

FIXTURES AND FURNISHINGS

Opticlear toughened glass splashback in Oyster White, £POA, Glassology. 3352B-L undermounted Icerock one-and-a-half bowl stainless steel sink, £700, Kohler. Verde Algae Arenastone worktop, £POA, Stewkley Stone. Pietra Laro Beige limestone flooring, around £90 per sq. m for similar, Stone Age. Fasem bar stools, from £960, Mowlem & Co. Sunken cellar with hinged round glass trap door, £27,600, Spiral Cellars. Floral glass pendants, £895 each, Louise Bradley Design. *Prices are approximate. For stockists, see page 154.

