

# Kitchens

## HEART OF THE HOME

Just like the bridge on a ship, today's kitchens are usually the control room of the home. To make them work as they should, there are a whole range of functions you need to consider.





IN THE LOGIC, A DISPLAY HOME DESIGNED by architect Tone Wheeler for builders Felton Homes, the kitchen is the hub of the home. It's a central point with the north-facing internal courtyard and the two living room wings on either side.

"Unlike most houses, which are a box on top of a box with very little outdoor space, this courtyard home has all these rooms opening onto it, particularly the well-appointed kitchen," says Wheeler.

The fridge and integrated coffee maker are at one end, next to a small media centre. In front is the kitchen's three-metre marble island bench, set well back from the other side, providing ample workspace.

There is an extra-wide bench next to the cooktop and glass splashback, which slides back to uncover deep bays for appliances. This kitchen is sleek, seamless and stylish.

Above: This stunning house by architect Tone Wheeler, built by Felton Homes, is designed so that the kitchen is the hub of the home.

## THE TRENDS

### **STREAMLINED SUSTAINABILITY**

Colin Kippax is Head Designer of a la Carte Design, the Australian distributor of German kitchen manufacturer Poggenpohl. ⇒

## TYPICAL KITCHEN COSTS

If you have about \$15,000 in your budget then you'd be right in the heartland of average kitchen pricing, according to Archicentre, the building advisory service of the Australian Institute of Architects. In their 2008 Cost Guide, Archicentre reveals that the average cost of a new kitchen is between \$10,200 and \$30,500, excluding appliances.

### FANCY FITTINGS?

Kastell Kitchens' Director Vince Monteverde says that while \$18,000 to \$20,000 can buy an average, simple



Although natural kitchen hues are popular, bold colours can make a stylish statement.



kitchen with stone benchtop, and about \$30,000 a mid-range to high-end one, some kitchens can be considerably more expensive. "Design complexity is what can really increase the price," he says "So can fittings. At the moment we're doing a kitchen with gold leaf doors that will cost about \$150,000, and that's without appliances!"

### REMOVING YOUR OLD KITCHEN

When costing a kitchen, you usually need to remove an existing one, as well as supply associated sub-trades, like the plumber, electrician, tiler and painter, for example, as well as install the new kitchen. Here's where costing a kitchen can be as long as a piece of string, because there is a myriad of choices for benchtops, doors and hardware, all affected by the specific size and shape of your room.

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He believes that sustainable kitchens will become mainstream and that most kitchens will be modular in design.

"The big change will be kitchens will be designed and installed to be eventually de-installed," he says in the June issue of industry magazine *Building Products News*. While Australian kitchens typically use what's known as a lattice plinth base, the cupboards in German kitchens are typically on legs and the kickboards are removable, which makes recycling easy.

### SHAPE AND COLOUR

It's not just sustainability that's in fashion. According to Roger Franchi, Managing Director of New European Kitchens (trading as Schmidt Kitchens), people continue to like modern and streamlined kitchens with straight lines.

"Galley kitchens are the most popular, with the wall oven, cooktop and fridge against the wall, and the island with the sink in it," he says.

Franchi says that while we're still asking for the neutrals like white and beige, darker colours like brown are also sometimes used, and a strong

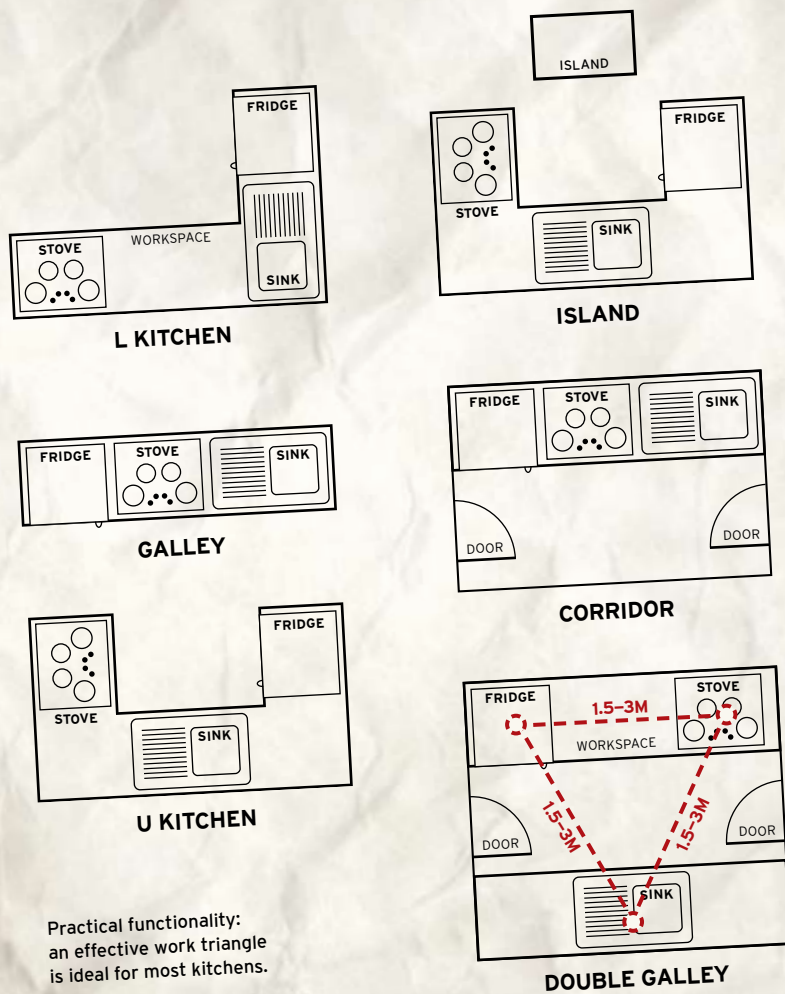
cafe latte colour is now popular. "But an Italian cafe latte!" says Franchi. There's also a tendency now to have a contrasting colour inside the cupboard instead of the basic white.

While looks are important, door hardware is also critical. The trend on this is to use silent closing doors and soft motion on drawers. Franchi says that Schmidt is launching a product that also allows you to open a door just by pushing it. "You still have the soft motion closing as well," he says.

## DESIGNING YOUR IDEAL KITCHEN

With a kitchen costing \$30,000 or more, it's particularly important to make sure your investment pays off. This is where having the right design input is essential.

While your best bet is to ask a kitchen designer, there are a few expert tips you should consider. You can have the kitchen any shape you want, so what are your choices?



Practical functionality: an effective work triangle is ideal for most kitchens.

### THE WORK TRIANGLE

While squares are the dominant geometric shapes in most kitchens, it's a triangle – albeit an imaginary one – that has always been an important element of a kitchen's design and functionality.

The "work triangle" is defined as an imaginary straight line drawn from the centre of the sink, to the centre of the cooktop, to the centre of the refrigerator and finally back to the sink. Experts suggest that the sum of the work triangle's three sides shouldn't be more than about eight metres, and each leg should be between one-and-a-half and three metres.

Sydney-based designer Antoinette Richards agrees. "I analyse this work pattern each time I design a kitchen layout and it's proven to be a valuable exercise," she advocates. "If the sum of the legs in the work triangle is too small, people will be tripping over each other and if too large, food preparation could be a very tiring task."

There are many styles of kitchen layouts including the L-kitchen, galley, U-shaped and island style. Perth-based Ross's Makeovers says that both the U-shaped

and the L-kitchen are popular because they're very efficient, particularly in small spaces. On the other hand, while the corridor or double galley kitchen can also be efficient, it can cause traffic to snarl when appliance and cupboard doors are open or if the corridor is too narrow.

### POINTING THE FINGER

While Kerry is very happy with the kitchen she renovated in her Sydney apartment, she wasn't happy about the process. It wasn't exactly a horror story, but a frustrating process that seemed to go on forever.

"It was just a hassle getting them to fix everything up," she says. "You need two to three weeks just to fix things, which drives you crazy." She notes that all her suppliers and tradespeople, no matter who they were, wanted to blame the other trades or existing structure. One example was the oven, which was like a 747 taking off when I first used it."

Kerry says: "I rang the company and asked them to come out. 'Yeah, yeah, yeah, we've fixed it', they said. But no, it hadn't been fixed. Another two phone calls and another fellow came out. ⇌

## RECOMMENDED PRODUCTS

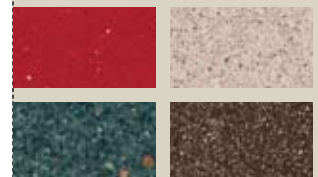
### RE-COVERING OPTIONS

If you just want to refresh your kitchen, then re-covering the benchtops may be a cost-effective option. You could consider Cristallino®, an engineered granite from Granite Transformations that fuses transparent tempered glass and semiprecious manufactured stone fragments.

Imported from Italy, Cristallino is heat, stain and scratch resistant, which makes it an ideal surface for kitchen benchtops and splashbacks as well as bathroom vanities, shower walls, tub surrounds and fireplaces.

### GREEN GOODS

A globally recognised standard for sustainable products is ISO14001. Caesarstone benchtops comply with this standard. Using reclaimed offcuts, recycled stone constitutes up to 42% of the finished material which is made of quartz, pigments and polymers.



Another indicator of product sustainability are the forest certification programs such as Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and Australian Forestry Standard (AFS). The 12 FSC-certified timber veneer panels from The Laminex Group, which can be used for interior joinery, are part of its Greenfirst initiative. The panels – also certified by Good Environmental Choice Australia – contribute to sustainable timber credits in the Green Building Council of Australia's Green Star rating tool.

While most Australian kitchens are constructed from particleboard or medium-density fibreboard (MDF) using formaldehyde resins,

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## TYPICAL KITCHEN COSTS CONTINUED

### KEY COMPONENTS

Despite these problems, Canberra-based Aneka Kitchens tries to help consumers by providing a rough guide to costing key components, on its comprehensive website. It points out that:

- Melamine-covered doors and similar products are lowest cost, followed by vinyl wrap, painted two-pack polyurethane, then wood veneer and finally solid wooden doors and panels.
- Light, solid colour is lower in cost than darker colours (which need a lot more care in manufacturing), while wood-grain and patterned surfaces are more expensive due to wastage incurred in matching panels for an even look.
- Matt or textured finish is lower in cost, followed by satin, semi-gloss and high gloss – the latter has a higher “risk premium” as small imperfections show up easily and re-work is often not possible, so a complete vinyl-wrapped door may need to be discarded.
- Plain straight-edged doors are the lowest cost, followed by bevelled edged doors, then face and edge profiled doors and recessed panelling.

### YOUR BENCHTOP

Another component that can affect costs greatly is the benchtop. There's a wide variety of choices, some of which can add thousands of dollars. Experts recommend benchtops with a depth of at least 600mm to 900mm. Also, when there's just one food-preparer, the preferred length is about 900mm; if two people tend to work side by side, then a length of about 1,200mm to 1,500mm is suggested.



He said it hadn't been installed correctly. So after another few phone calls, the kitchen people came out. They said: 'We've installed ovens like this for 10 years and no-one's ever complained'. After a suggestion from the oven people to re-level the oven, everything's finally fine."

Another example was that the design called for a shelf and bin under the sink. Despite measuring up, the kitchen company didn't allow for the pipes. The result? The bin and shelf didn't fit.

To avoid these types of problems, it's a good idea to check the service experiences of others before you finalise your choice of kitchen company. Get some referrals and check up on how the company dealt with the installation itself and any post-installation issues. It's also worth double-checking the measurements yourself – see our trade secret for more.

### WE WERE FLOORED BY THE FLOOR

Ten years ago after James and Marion put in a new kitchen as part of the extension of their Sydney home, they have to do it all again. Over time, and unbeknown to them, the dishwasher had been steadily leaking

onto the timber floor underneath, rotting the bearers and joists.

The problem was only recently discovered when James went to find something from the storage area underneath. "I just happened to look up," he says, "And then I could see all this rotten timber." Marion says they were horrified by the discovery. "We had no idea anything was leaking and a new kitchen was certainly not on the radar," she says.

However, because the kitchen includes a dining area with a tiled floor, it's a large area that now needs to be pulled up and redone – at the insurance company's expense. And even though it was the dishwasher that leaked, the problem was exacerbated by the fact that particleboard flooring had been laid as the flooring substrate over the timber bearers and joists.

While previously they hadn't really paid any attention to the substrate underneath the tiles, Marion and James are now a lot more focused on what lies beneath. They're in the process of assessing quotes and finalising the replacement. And they say they'll definitely be using Scyon™ Secura™ wet area flooring under the tiles! ■

# YOUR KITCHEN

## construction checklist\*

**DIMENSIONS:** Firstly, check the dimensions, and if you're not very good at visualising things, ask for a 3D drawing and make sure you pace out the space. For example, when home owners Sally and Sue were renovating their home, they realised as building progressed that there was not only nowhere for a bin in the kitchen, but there was no pantry either. The plans just showed a simple U-shaped kitchen.

**VISUALISE:** They say that one of the most difficult things about their renovation was trying to visualise things that didn't exist. With only the one flat set of architect's drawings, they felt they "never had any idea" how things would look, despite their many visits to kitchen and other showrooms. In the end, they had to redesign the kitchen as they went, leading to more variations with the builder.

**TIME FRAME & STEPS:** The other key thing to bear in mind is the time it will take to complete the job and the sequence of steps - particularly if you are arranging other tradespeople like the plumber and the electrician. In addition, while your choice of finishes can drive up the cost, it can also affect the time it takes to build the kitchen. The lead time to order a new kitchen can be anywhere from six to 12 weeks, but the installation period is much shorter. The basic schedule of works is as follows:

- Removing the old kitchen's cabinets and appliances,** electrical wiring and plumbing disconnected and pipes and electrical relocated ready for new kitchen - **one day.**
- Kitchen cabinets delivered and installed** - **one to two days.**
- Electrician and plumber return** to connect up power, lights, plumbing and finish off - **one day.**
- Plastering work** - **one day** (if required).
- Tiling** - **one day** (if required).
- Quality control check,** final adjustments - **one day** (if required).

**THE DETAILS:** If you choose a laminated benchtop and a tiled splashback, then the benchtop is usually finished off at the same time as the cabinets are installed. However, if you choose granite, for example, then you'll typically need to allow eight to ten days. Glass splashbacks are likely to take another two weeks or so, because the glazier normally arrives after the benchtop is installed to create a template. Depending on the structural work to be done, you could be without your kitchen for up to six weeks.

**REAL LIFE EXPERIENCE:** However, with a well-organised kitchen company, the duration can be much shorter. Home owners Mark and Julian built a new kitchen as part of the renovation of their inner-city home. They used Caesarstone for a large island bench and benchtops, as well as running straight up the wall to form the splashbacks. It's a deeper shade than the two-pack polyurethane cupboards and contrasts with stainless steel Kleenmaid appliances.

Mark can't speak highly enough of Kastell Kitchens, which designed and built the kitchen. "Kastell Kitchens: they are deluxe," he says. "The whole thing was over in about a week."

Julian agrees. "You can see by their preparation, they are very professional with everything," he says.

The total cost was about \$24,750, excluding the trades involved in electrical, plumbing and flooring, as these costs were all included as part of the main renovation. Appliances added about another \$10,000.

\*This is a general checklist and does not replace the installation requirements of individual manufacturers.

## RECOMMENDED PRODUCTS CONTINUED

Xanita offers X-Board Plus. X-Board Plus uses post-consumer waste and reduces weight by 45% when compared to 18mm particleboard. "It can also be manufactured formaldehyde-free and VOC-free on request," says Xanita General Manager Robin Curtis.

### WHEN GLASS IS NOT JUST GLASS

New European Kitchens' Franchi says that while all glass used in splashbacks is toughened, it's the Starphire glass that doesn't look like it has a green tint. With a low iron content, Starphire glass offers a clear view with increased brightness, clarity and light transmittance.

## TRADE SECRET

### »»WHAT'S BEHIND THE SPLASHBACK AND WHAT'S UNDER THE FLOOR?

Consider using Villaboard® lining behind the splashback and Scyon™ Secura™ wet area flooring under the tiles. Both Villaboard lining and Secura wet area flooring are resistant to damage from moisture. That's because James Hardie® fibre cement and Scyon™ products are homogeneously resistant to moisture damage, which means that even if the material does get wet, it won't deform or lose its structural integrity, like many other materials.



Left: A 3D render of your new kitchen can help you visualise if it can work for you.