

Interiors



'WE TOOK OUR TIME TO GET IT JUST RIGHT'

Husband and wife Lloyd and Leila Touwen make up two of the trio behind Pluck. They live in Brixton in South London, close to the company's workshop, with their son

The trend for kitchens is that they are more like living rooms – it's not about having blank walls and shiny lights. We've layered this space to make it feel rich with things we're constantly collecting, such as old paintings and ceramics, which also give flashes of colour. Including art helps it flow with the rest of the house, and we never worry about mixing eras. Our goal was that nothing would stand out too much. We wanted to make a statement without it being in your face, and although Pluck cabinetry is made from plywood, there's definitely a soft edge to the palette, which means the units get absorbed by the surroundings. The blue and pink colour scheme is quite classic; all over the walls and ceiling is Farrow & Ball Setting Plaster, which is echoed in the handles and plinths in a shade we call Ruskin Blossom. We chose a London Plane veneer for the cabinet fronts contrasted with Atlantic Blue and a Juniper Corian worktop.

We lived here for years before embarking on the kitchen, so we knew exactly how we wanted it. We have a taller butcher's block section, which faces out to the dining area and which has revolutionised how we use the kitchen – before, we'd have our backs to people when prepping food. The flooring is encaustic Moroccan tiles and we deliberated over something more contemporary, but as the house is Victorian and Pluck cabinetry is quite modern, we wanted to juxtapose that with something that felt older.

We searched hard for wall tiles that worked; these are Tratti by Inga Sempé from Domus (domusgroup.com) and no two are the same. A great move was putting the washing machine in a utility cupboard in the bathroom – they take up so much space. *Pluck kitchens start from £15,000 (pluck.kitchen)*

Finding the right recipe for a perfect kitchen

Olivia Lidbury asks four industry experts for the inside information on how to mix and match with style – and discovers whether their own cooking spaces live up to expectations

'I HAVE EXTRACTION ENVY'

Adam Vergette is a co-founder of Plykea, a company specialising in plywood doors, fronts and worktops for Ikea kitchens. He lives in east London with his partner and their son

I made this kitchen myself around five years ago. I come from a design production background and at the time I was making lots of furniture out of plywood, which is a lot nicer and less hazardous to work with than MDF. As I already owned the key appliances, such as a range cooker and an American fridge freezer, and the boiler being in a set place owing to the extension, I worked backwards and deciding where everything would go became quite obvious.

Unlike what we offer with Plykea, this kitchen is fully bespoke. It was when my friend (and Plykea co-founder) Tim wanted a similar style of kitchen done for cheaper that I had a go at making him some fronts for an Ikea carcass with a neighbour's CNC machine. It was pretty straightforward, and we thought it could be a nice sideline – but the rise has been meteoric.

We now offer coloured fronts in Formica but my head has never been turned, I love natural birch plywood because of its neutrality; if ever it feels bland, we can add colourful plant pots and accessories. It's also super tough and durable: my three-year-old son drives his cars all over it and there's not a mark on it. Most of our furniture is Scandinavian in style, so there's a minimalist aesthetic running through the house. For the flooring, we chose plain



porcelain tiles with underfloor heating for the simple reason that they could easily go with anything in the future. The worktop is a brilliant material called Fenix, a faced plywood that, if you superficially scratch it, can be healed by applying heat. It also has fingerprintless technology, so it can have quite a bit of use before you need to clean off greasy marks.

Since creating this space, I've discovered German-designed Bora (bora.com) induction hobs, which we also have in our showroom. Unlike gas rings, they are so easy to clean and the extraction, which is in the worktop, is amazing. Once you've seen one in action and then go to use your overhead extractor, you realise how rubbish they are!

Plykea fronts for a kitchen Adam's size would start from around £4,500 (plykea.com)



'WE WANTED TO PUSH THE DESIGN ENVELOPE'

Will and Elly Simmons are the directors of Herringbone Kitchens, a bespoke kitchen maker based in Canterbury, Kent. They live in the city with their two children

We created this kitchen almost five years ago and certainly felt pressure to get it right. We wanted it to be a statement about our brand while reflecting our taste, and all the while making it likeable. The house was formerly let out to students and the kitchen was dark with only about four units in it so we reimagined it completely, adding a breakfast bar with a shelf positioned over it for more storage.

The cabinetry is traditional, but we pushed the design envelope by adding brass handles by Buster & Punch (busterandpunch.com) and a bespoke quartz floor – certainly not the most cost-effective way of doing it, but there were so few options available in the style we wanted five years ago.

One of the best things we did was to go into the return of a door that leads outside to create a big pantry to hold all our dried food. However, in hindsight the wine chiller that holds 30 bottles was a bit extravagant! It's not a huge space, so we could have used more storage, but we were just so excited.

We didn't put in a Quooker hot water tap immediately because of the cost, but when we were able to it was so helpful – they are definitely worth the expense. Most people don't have endless budget and it's all about compromise, but it



▲ Brass handles have added an extra dimension and 'warmth' to the design

could be worth sacrificing a couple of drawers for one, because you'll use it all the time.

We are moving house soon and while we love these navy blue cabinets, for the next space we're thinking of going lighter in colour, as well as including stained oak cabinetry. Here, the worktop is a Silestone quartz because it's so wipeable, but a statement marble top flecked with brown or pink is top of the wish list. One thing we'll definitely go for again is brass hardware: we like the warmth that it provides and it's much more readily available now.

Herringbone kitchens start from £25,000 (herringbonekitchens.com)

'I WANTED TO BALANCE THE TRADITIONAL WITH THE MODERN'

Merlin Wright is the design director of Plain English and British Standard kitchens. He lives in west London with his wife and their three teenage children

When designing a kitchen for a Victorian terrace like ours, the choice is usually either a long run of cabinets with or without an island, or a peninsula between the cook and the diners. I chose the latter and closed off the walkway through to the sitting room, which was put in as a result of a side return extension. The sink went in the area gained, but I kept the light by putting in a hinged steel window – sort of like a hatch – which means one can look through into the sitting room while washing up, or pass a cup of tea through.

I like this style of British Standard cabinetry because it's neither traditional nor modern. We used contemporary steel handles by Knud Holscher

from D Line (dline.com) because again, I felt they struck that balance nicely. The hand-painted finish (this is Tempest by Fired Earth) is easy to repair and ages well. Plus, it's much easier to change up entirely further down the line than with a sprayed alternative. The worktop is honed Carrara marble, which isn't terrifically durable, but I like the character that it develops. The first stain is annoying, but then they all sort of join up.

Lighting is an endless, seemingly unsolvable problem – we still don't have any over our dining table – but almost all rooms look better if you have lots of different zones that are controllable. We used halogen lights in the ceiling, which



are set back with a small collar so you don't see the fitting, and we have two bone china lamps on the wall from Original BTC. Our splashback is inexpensive but effective: it's just painted glass screwed on to the wall. It's easy to clean and means you can have the exact colour you want.

We were tight on space and on the whole this room has worked out well because we wanted lots of living space, too. However, I do covet a warming drawer and if I were to do it again I'd install a smart tap that dispenses boiling hot and fizzy water.

British Standard by Plain English kitchens start from £8,000. (britishstandardcupboards.co.uk)