

Interiors



PANTRY GOALS

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The new middle-class kitchen

Forget flash gadgets and dazzling surfaces. Warmth, wit and clever gizmos are must-haves at the heart of the home. By Olivia Lidbury

The kitchen has traditionally been a place of refuge for the middle-class parent. A safe space in which to relax with a cup of tea and take a break from the pressures of life and the relentless scrutiny of social media. No longer. As Rachel Johnson revealed in this newspaper last month, the young have taken to ridiculing their parents' kitchen styles on TikTok. Is nothing sacred? Apparently not: having an Aga and a water-dispensing American-style fridge makes you one big Tory cliché.

There may be something in this criticism, even if it comes from such an unwelcome source. The wise know that

true status symbols in a kitchen are rarely flashy, but instead are quietly tasteful, useful and reliable. A sensible statement kitchen does not shout – it murmurs reassurance.

Specifically: clinical and brochure-like is out; warm and eclectic is in. Here, the experts share what you need in the heart of the home now.

A POT FILLER

While the appetite for do-it-all water taps shows no sign of abating (at Quooker, 70 per cent of orders are for its "cube" model, which dispenses H₂O in hot, cold, boiling, chilled, filtered and

sparkling formats), the incoming must-have is lower tech and highly nostalgic. The pot filler – a tap with an articulated arm located on the backsplash over your cooktop enabling you to fill large pots where they will be heated – is a staple in grand kitchens across the pond and gaining momentum here, too.

"It's such a great old-fashioned gadget that we couldn't help but introduce it to our collection of aged brass taps," says Helen Parker, creative director at deVOL Kitchens, whose delectable cabinetry is high on many a renovator's wish list. It stocks a range by Perrin & Rowe, from £420.

A STATEMENT SINK



Adrian Bergman, design manager at kitchen company British Standard, agrees. "It's a very useful thing to have and a talking point, too."

The pot filler doesn't dispense hot water, and you will need a water feed running up the wall to make use of one, but it eliminates the need to lift heavy water-filled pots from sink to stove.

A DOWNDRAFT EXTRACTOR

It's the ultimate first-world conundrum: what to do about extraction when your heart is set on putting the hob on the kitchen island where you may not be able to fit a cooker hood. The solution? An extractor set into the cooktop.

"The Bora downdraft extraction system eliminates the dreaded overhead extractor units, making for lighter, more open kitchens and perfectly resolves the problem while still combating cooking smells and grease," says George Glasier, co-founder of Brixton-based kitchen maker Pluck.

This ingenious bit of kit – starting price £2,616 – is integrated into the worktop and draws vapours downwards. Al Bruce, founder of the kitchen designer Olive & Barr, has a Bora in his own kitchen. "It has revolutionised how I ventilate my kitchen," he says.

A STATEMENT SINK

Chunky and marbled or jewel-like and shiny, the next generation of blingy sinks makes the ceramic Belfast-style version look positively pedestrian.

Interior designer Natalia Miyer favours those by Officine Gullo, the luxury Florentine kitchen specialist famed for its signature metalwork aesthetic (its kitchens start from an equally opulent £45,000). "Every kitchen has a wet area, so it may as well be beautiful," she says. Officine Gullo's burnished copper sink with a brass trim (from £3,370; also available in brass and stainless steel) is semi-recessed into the cabinetry, making for an unmissable statement piece.

For an element of surprise, deVOL's polished brass sink (£900) is under-mounted, so you can't see its jewel-like splendour until you get up close. "Solid brass is actually a very traditional material to use for a sink, and it will age beautifully over time" says deVOL's Parker.

▲ Shining examples: deVOL's brass sink, top left, and Tom Howley's glass-front cabinets, above

► Breath of fresh air: a Bora extractor hob

A DOWNDRAFT EXTRACTOR



GLASS CABINETRY

Open shelving is all well and good until someone empties the dishwasher and puts the kids' plastic bowls in pride of place. Styling your home like an interiors magazine is harder than it looks. Cue glazed cabinets: "They break up the monotony of repetitive, solid fronted doors and maximise the flow of light into darker corners," says Emily Rumble, kitchen designer at Tom Howley.

Pluck's cabinets come in fluted glass, which distorts the view of the contents. "Customers can choose any of our colours for the interior, so through the glass it creates a lovely hazy view of the crockery with a soft-hued background," says Glasier.

Miyer believes this is another influence from the US: "It has that New York style element that is very on-trend and a slightly industrial quality, but is also glamorous, which our clients want."

OFF-BROCHURE ACCENTS

"Kitchens shouldn't be purely functional spaces," says Tom Cox of HAM Interiors, an advocate of adding boldly coloured artworks into the mix. Indeed, the key to a cosy, welcoming kitchen lies in making it as homely and unique as any other room in the home.

Cue table lamps on worktops (yes, really), sink skirts, artworks and rugs. Cox uses the latter to define open-plan spaces. "They can tie a scheme together and are an inexpensive way to add colour and pattern," he says. "Choose flat-weaves rather than deep piles as they will be easier to clean – and keep in mind that patterned rugs will be more forgiving of spills."

At British Standard, Bergman is seeing an uptick in demand for tongue and groove panelling. "It softens the space and, historically, wood panelling was used to hide rising damp in solid walls," he says. "It's also a great surface to play with colour."

EMBRACE THE OLD

Including something preloved will not only make the heart of the home more interesting, but it is also more sustainable. "Antiques help offset the uniformity of built-in joinery and naturally come with character that is hard to recreate," says HAM's Cox. It could be a reclaimed door, an old butcher's block for an island, or an upcycled dresser sourced on Facebook Marketplace.

"An old linen press makes a great store cupboard, while a 19th-century glazed cabinet is ideal for displaying crockery, glasses or artworks," adds Cox. You could also up the sustainability factor by keeping your existing kitchen carcass and replacing the fronts with more contemporary doors. Brands such as Custom Fronts (customfronts.co.uk), Holte (holte.studio) and Naked Doors (nakeddoors.com) offer doors in myriad finishes.

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If the pandemic taught us anything, it's the joy of being able to rustle up a nutritious meal for the whole family from whatever is in the store cupboard. The walk-in pantry, a staple in grand homes, has become much requested in modest suburban houses – but most make do with a double-fronted larder cupboard.

Fiona Ginnert, director at Hackney-based Holte, which specialises in fronts for Ikea carcasses, agrees. "People love them to hide their messy appliances, such as coffee machines and toasters, or to house gizmos such as a Nutribullet."

THE KITCHEN CLASSICS TO COVET NOW



The water filter

Smart and good-looking, LARQ's pitcher features a self-cleaning, plant-based filter that uses a two-step filtration process to ensure the purest drinking water. LARQ, from £125, livelarq.com



The carbonator

Not still buying bottles of sparkling water, are you? Aarke's design-led carbonators come in a variety of desirable finishes, so you won't mind clogging up your worktop with one. Aarke Carbonator, from £179, aarke.com



The pan

The Perfect Pot from cult US brand Our Place really is just that, thanks to thoughtful details such as a removable steaming and roasting rack, a built-in strainer and a spoon rest. The Perfect Pot, £140, fromourplace.co.uk



The toaster

Designer George Snowden has made the humble toaster an object of desire with statement colours – not one to hide away in the pantry cupboard. Haytoaster, £85, skandium.com



The coffee machine

Smeg's compact, retro espresso machine dispenses a long and a short coffee. If you stare at it long enough, you might just be able to pretend that you're drinking it on the Amalfi coast. Smeg capsule coffee machine, £199, johnlewis.com



The grill

Bring Japanese cooking home with this restaurant-sized Konro Grill. Chuck some charcoal in the bottom and get grilling meats, fish and vegetables around the table. Medium-wide Konro grill, £539, sousvidetools.com



The wine fridge

Always be party-ready with a fridge full of perfectly chilled plonk. A built-in style makes great use of a slim worktop overhang. Dunavox wine cooler, £899, elitefridges.co.uk

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