

Open wide...

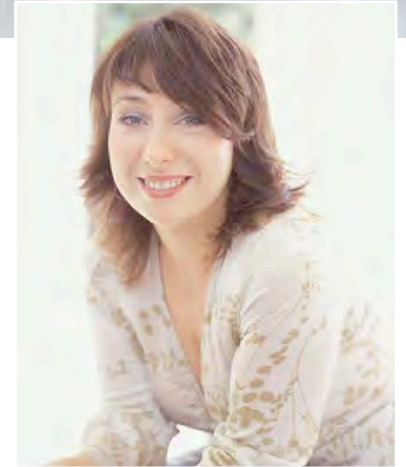


The rise in the number of households without children has led to an increase in the number of properties now boasting open plan living and dining areas. More and more new builds are adopting open plan designs to make the most of available space and to suit the lifestyle of their target market of professionals who are yet to start their families.

The advantages of open plan living areas are abundant; parties will no longer be divided by walls, hosts can mingle with their dinner party guests while they cook and natural light can be used to its fullest to create large, bright rooms with windows on almost every side.

There are, however, some elements to consider when planning your living area. "Research the styling because the kitchen is going to dominate the design of the rest of your living space" says interiors expert Andrea Maffin. Rather than looking like three separate rooms, open plan areas should be one coherent room encompassing different elements. Andrea advises to "make a wish list and work toward achieving each element". Think about how you want the area to look as a whole then pick elements and units that will complement and add to the overall appearance.

Andrea Maffin shares with Home Plus Scotland her top tips for designing a successful open plan area.



"In the past cooker hoods have been a necessary evil, but I'm glad to say there have been major developments happening with extractor hoods. They are now becoming both fashion statements and practical appliances"

The new Futura cooker hood from Blanco by Gutmann is ingeniously designed to retract completely into the work surface when not in use. Priced at around £4,645, available to order from Deeside Interiors in Aberdeenshire, call 01224 735480.



“Don't be afraid to make your space work harder by incorporating essentials like sink, hob, breakfast bar and an extractor hood. Some kitchen companies even offer innovatively designed island units that can hide all of these components when they are not in use”



The Silent Move island by Hacker sits perfectly in an open plan environment. The island houses the hob and sink which can be easily concealed by sliding it effortlessly into the worktop. Available for £17,000 from Country Kitchens in Stirling. Call 01324 831679 or log on to www.kitchens-scotland.com for more information.

The Opus White Gloss kitchen teams simple geometric lines with a highly reflective gloss finish to create an individual yet practical modern kitchen. The white finish means you can be daring with colour in other parts of your open-plan area without risking a colour clash. For pricing and more details contact Forth Valley Kitchens in Edinburgh on 0131 334 6200 or visit www.fvkitchens.co.uk



White or cream gloss mixed with wood looks very chic indeed and, depending on the style of cabinet, can look bang up-to-date or exude timeless appeal.



The Scandinavian Blond kitchen by the Poggenpohl lends itself to be open plan and the heart of the home. Priced from around £20,000. For more information call 0207 435 5427 www.poggenpohl.co.uk.

“I would be careful trying to match every element in your home to your kitchen cabinets. In my opinion, nearly matching is much worse than not trying to match. When considering changing styles, take into account the flooring and the cabinets in equal measure. Sometimes I’ve seen too much wood used in one place and it can lose its beauty when you see it on mass. A mixture of flat walls with textured stone worktop next to matt steel appliances and gloss cabinets with natural materials and glass splash backs can look really stunning – this season it’s all about being bold with your statements.”



A great example of wood being used as a base for other materials is the 2008 KI Kitchens Collection at Kitchens International. Stella toffee and anthracite are combined with Faro toffee, designed to make a seamless transition from kitchen to dining and living. This kitchen is priced from £12,000. Call 0131 337 3434 or visit www.kitchensinternational.co.uk

William Ball has fused entertaining and living by extending their contemporary Helena range. A 600mm base unit costs around £210 and is available from Designs 95 Ltd in Stirling. Call 01786 446606.



The Deco Dining Collection in high gloss black is scratch resistant. Available from Sovereign Furniture in Falkirk. Call 01324 629421 www.ilovefurniture.co.uk

The planning trend to create a family kitchen should accommodate much more than just cooking the Sunday roast. The kitchen has always been the heart of the home but now it's an interactive, multimedia social statement. It sets the style tone for the rest of the home.



This perfect open plan living solution is created using the ALNO Look and ALNO Art Prime door ranges available exclusively from Moda Interiors, Dundee. For prices and other information call 01382 224557 or visit www.modainteriors.co.uk



The Urban Citrique kitchen from Magnet is perfect for open plan living. Priced at £266.45 for a standard 600x600 unit. Call 0845 123 6789 www.magnet.co.uk

Consider more adventurous colours and perhaps a contrasting stone worktop or solid walnut, teak, zebrano or even bamboo, to contrast and add to the rest of the kitchen.



Stone and ceramic expert Alvaro Ziani de Ferranti has recently launched a 'stock' range which includes this beautiful African Brown polished limestone flooring. Also available in honed or textured finishes, it comes in shades from light to dark brown. The flooring costs £141 plus VAT per square metre and further details can be found by calling 0870 321 0511 or by visiting www.deferranti.com.

Using the same flooring throughout is going to give the appearance of more space.



Ideal for busy open plan living areas, Oyster slate flooring from Kirk Natural Stone is hardwearing and practical yet retains a light feel. Priced from £41 per m². Kirk Natural Stone have showrooms in Glasgow and Aberdeenshire. Call 0141 771 9984 or visit www.kirknaturalstone.com for more details.

Island life

Jim Geddes of Kitchens International predicts the rise of the kitchen island

2008 sees the kitchen island reach its pinnacle. No longer a much desired luxury they have become the number one necessity in most medium to large kitchens. This year leading kitchen specialists, Kitchens International, predict that they will be designing and installing islands in almost three quarters of all kitchens they sell.

Islands have evolved into highly functional and practical parts of the kitchen. They provide a good visual break between the kitchen and living area, as well as often doubling up as a dining bar and, for many, the cooking area.

Island design is crucial to ensure the kitchen retains a coordinated look. Using contrasting furniture and worktop to the rest of the kitchen allows the island to be more than just food preparation and more a central gathering place for socialising and eating.

Jim Geddes, Kitchens International Director says: "Kitchen planning and design has changed vastly in the last few years and very frequently walls are being knocked down to give a large living/dining kitchen that is the heart of the home. The island then becomes the central focus of that room.

"In the last year or so the trend seems to be for an island that contains an elegant eating bar area, a hob for those who wish to cook and socialise at the same time and a small food preparation area. This means that the worktops must be carefully selected, or two matched together, to create a multi-purpose area."

For ease of use the hob and sink should be situated close together so it makes sense often to place the hob on the island with a small round wash sink and then the main sink in another area of the kitchen.

For many, the island design is paramount and comes before the rest of the kitchen as it is such a focal point. Heights on the island may also differ for diverse uses or the island may be lower than the rest of the kitchen to create a natural break in the whole look.

Whatever your preference in 2008, the island is definitely an oasis in the kitchen.

Kitchens International has branches in Aberdeen, Edinburgh and Kilmarnock.
www.kitchensinternational.co.uk