

KITCHEN STYLE

ARE YOU MORE HOUSE-PROUD
HAMPTONS OR A MODERNIST? READ ON
TO FIND YOUR PERFECT KITCHEN LOOK

WORDS SHELLEY TUSTIN



SURROUNDED BY SEDUCTIVE images of chic cooking spaces, it's easy to fall in lust with a dozen different kitchen designs. Narrowing it down to your own personal style – one that suits you, your home and the way you live – is where you'll find true love, but it can be difficult, and even harder to articulate when it comes time to engage a kitchen designer. This is where a picture – or a collection of pictures – says a thousand words. A moodboard, made with tear sheets from magazines, an electronic version constructed via the *House Rules powered by Home Beautiful* app or a Pinterest board can all help pin down your style.

While the experts agree you don't have to match your kitchen exactly to the rest of your home, you do need to consider the look and era of

your property to a degree. "It's important to play to the existing style or architectural detail, but you can introduce a composite style with subtle nuances," says designer Adam Scougall of As You See It. "For example, you may have a streamlined home but want to introduce a traditional kitchen. By using minimal panel work in the cupboards, you can introduce a new style without totally abandoning the fact you have a modern build."

Interior designer Jane McPherson suggests that a stark contrast – for example, between an older home and a kitchen in a modern extension – is possible. "The link between the two parts of the home should be the flow of colour, materials and joinery finishes," she says. Come with us as we dissect the four classic kitchen looks of the moment.

TIP To avoid unsightly discolouration of grout on tiled areas, Carmel Dee of GIA Bathrooms & Kitchens has this practical tip: “Ensure you seal grout or use a black or grey one,” she says. “This will require less maintenance.”



“The kitchen should work with the home to some degree, but it’s a space of creativity, so it’s important to give it its own style” ~ Carmel Dee, designer

MIX & MATCH

Committing to a single bench or cabinetry finish is a tough job, but there are benefits to spreading the love over a mix of materials. Some surfaces, such as marble, look stunning but are hard on the hip pocket and often less than practical. By mixing up your materials, you can save the fancy stuff for the island bench – or wherever it will be most admired – and use a more hard-wearing stone composite, stainless steel or even laminate on those work surfaces that take more of a beating. Choose materials that are connected in tone, but clearly different, so the contrast looks intentional. In cabinets, a mix of materials can help break up a solid wall of colour; try using darker cabinets below the bench and lighter ones above for an airy look. You can also frame your kitchen with dark cabinetry or use a different material, such as timber veneer, at each end to define the space.



HAMPTONS

With its combination of panelled timber cabinetry, beautiful natural stone and freestanding cookers, Hamptons design has much in common with a traditional look. But while a classic kitchen is all stews and teacakes, the cleaner approach of the American East Coast look is more soufflés and bouillabaisse. This style is the perfect match to an older home, featuring dark timber floors and ornate architectural detailing.

One of the defining features is light, with the typical palette consisting of white, marble and more white. Designer Carmel Dee says the cabinetry should be hand-painted with a Shaker-style profile. “White or grey is the most popular colour palette, however beautiful navy-blue hues also look stunning,” she says. A matt polyurethane can also be used, but the benefit of hand-painted cabinetry is that you can easily redo it down the track if it needs a refresh, or if you decide you would like a colour change.

Marble is the benchtop surface of choice, adding texture to a predominantly white space – and also a large dose of luxury – but it can be an expensive and problematic material. “Calacutta or Carrara marble is timeless, but it’s extremely porous, so all care needs to be taken in cleaning up spills,” warns Adam Scougall. “A great alternative is Caesarstone’s Calacatta Nuvo range, which has Calacatta marble’s veined appearance but, as it’s made of quartz, it’s hardwearing, easy to keep clean and much more economical.”

Marble is often extended up the splashback as well, but you could also try subway tiles. They are a cheaper and more practical alternative, while still delivering a distinctly Hamptons look. >



MODERN

A modern kitchen is a minimalist's dream, with sleek surfaces, integrated appliances and an emphasis on superior storage. Everything that can be hidden, will be hidden – appliance cupboards are a must, with bonus points if you can squeeze in a scullery. Deceptively simple, it's a look that can be tricky to get right. "Even though modern kitchens are minimal, all those joins and edge details take hours to get right," says designer Carmel Dee. In short, this is not a job to DIY.

High-gloss laminate or 2-pac polyurethane is the most common choice for cabinetry in a modern kitchen, giving that ultra-clean and super-slick appearance, but pay attention to what else is in the space, as white especially takes on the colour of whatever it reflects, whether it's the green garden outside or a neon artwork in an adjacent living space. If this is less than ideal, consider a semi-gloss finish instead.

Quartz composite and polished stone are the benchtop materials that most scream 'modern!', but a relatively new player on the market is also worth considering. Porcelain surfaces, available in Australia from Dekton and Neolith, have the benefits of stone composite and can also be made in super-thin sheets for use on drawer fronts and splashbacks for the ultimate streamlined look.

All these surfaces are quintessentially of the moment, but if you're worried about your contemporary kitchen looking stark, there are plenty of materials that can add warmth. Timber veneer and plywood are on-trend materials for cabinets; Moroccan or herringbone tiles add texture to a splashback; or you could lift the mood with a bright fizz of colour in a glass splashback.



"A few visits to good kitchen companies will help you get a feel for the products on the market - there are so many wonderful finishes, products and appliances" ~ Jane McPherson, designer

FINISHING TOUCHES

In essence, a kitchen is little more than a giant storage box – it's the finishing touches that do the most to define and express your personal style. Decorative lighting is essential for pulling together your kitchen look; choose a trio of cafe-style pendant lights for a Hamptons kitchen, something metallic and edgy for industrial, and a slick statement piece for a modern kitchen. Cabinet hardware is also worth spending time over – it's the tiniest detail, but one you will appreciate daily. A modern kitchen benefits from simplicity – finger pulls are ideal for a seamless look – while a more traditional kitchen looks best with touches of black or brass in cup pulls, dome handles or even ice-box latches.

Whites dominate in this sleek kitchen, with co-ordinated metallic detailing on the island stools, dining chairs, cabinetry handles, tapware and overhead lighting/rangehood unit emphasising its modern style. >



MATERIALS



TRADITIONAL

The mood of a traditional kitchen is nurturing and warm. Think Nan's floral aprons, tea in a pot, something delicious bubbling cheerily on the stove. "This style of kitchen can be seen in a lot of beautiful old terrace homes," says interior designer Jane McPherson. "The design is usually more decorative and ornate, with open shelving for dinner plates, detailed timber cabinetry, and the use of colour with a warm, welcoming feel."

The cupboards in a traditional kitchen tend to be timber – often stained, not painted – benchtops are usually timber or stone, and floors are timber or tile, with the whole effect running the risk of being dark and gloomy. Give this type of kitchen a more light-embracing Australian aesthetic by incorporating extra windows and skylights to draw in natural light. You could also mix up the materials, balancing walnut or American oak base cabinets below with white-painted timber on overhead cupboards. Cabinetry can also be used to integrate inescapably modern appliances, such as fridges, into the style.

Benchtops in traditional kitchens are typically timber or natural stone (honed rather than polished), which deliver warmth and texture in spades. However, each surface has its issues; timber needs to be vigilantly maintained, while stone can be prohibitively expensive. Take a leaf from the Hamptons book and use a more durable and wallet-friendly stone composite for the working surfaces. Silestone's Suede range has a gorgeous matte finish that's a good substitute for honed stone.



PHOTOGRAPHY (THIS PAGE, TOP) ARMELLE HABIB, (BOTTOM) NATALIE HUNFALVAY.
(OPPOSITE, TOP) ARMELLE HABIB, (BOTTOM) JOHN DOWNS

The timber in this industrial-style kitchen has a plain undecorated finish without a trace of panelling.



“The kitchen is such an essential part of the home and of a family’s lifestyle. It’s one of the spaces in the house where the function outweighs the finishes” ~ Carmel Dee, designer.

INDUSTRIAL

If you’re lucky enough to live in a converted warehouse, an industrial kitchen might be your style by default, but these kitchens needn’t be exclusive to a gritty urban setting. The key is to showcase raw materials: unrendered brick, if you have it, unfinished timber, concrete and metals such as steel, zinc, copper and iron.

Adam Scougall of As You See It warns this look is not for minimalists or neat freaks. “The beauty of living with an industrial kitchen is that the patina of the materials should change, with the wear and tear considered a feature rather than a hindrance,” he says. Though heavy materials dominate, this type of kitchen is anything but cold, with metals often balanced by rustic timber – particularly recycled wood – in cupboards, panels and open shelves. “Reclaimed wood is not only an interesting, warm option, but also brings a sense of history to an industrial space,” adds Adam.

Concrete is a beautiful and versatile material for an industrial kitchen, perfect not only for floors, but also for the benches and splashbacks, and even cast into the kitchen sink for a seamless look. However, the experts warn that, although it’s hardy and tough, concrete needs to be sealed and maintained to keep its good looks.

TIP “You need to see all your samples in the natural light of the space,” says Jane McPherson. “I normally recommend only a few colours, as there are a lot of different materials in the kitchen: the floor finish, joinery colour and finish, the bench, and your appliances in stainless steel, white or black.”

