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KITCHEN

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Feature by Tamsin Kingswell

essential guide to...

kitchen planning

Before installing any cook zone, carefully consider all of your options to ensure that costly mistakes are avoided and your dream scheme is efficiently and perfectly achieved.

A good kitchen begins when you let your imagination run riot. Picture your dream design in your mind, then look through some magazines, send for brochures to peruse and surf the Internet. Even if you have no clue as what it is you want at the beginning, this process will help to clarify which designs you might like. Once you have a collection of images, start a scrapbook to keep together all of those features that you really would prefer to include.

Magazines and the Internet will also provide you with a handy guide to the companies that best fit in with the ideas you have for the space. However, a visit to a showroom is an absolute must. Magazine styling can be very seductive, but it can't show you the functionality of a room, so it's always useful to see a show kitchen and check all the little details; how a cupboard door opens or how a layout works, for example.

This is also an opportunity to meet a company's designers and discover if you're compatible. As with any other relationship in life, working with a designer requires a level of confidence and trust. Explains Scott Lawrence, a designer at Kitchen Culture, "My first undertaking is always to listen to the client and to try to understand their needs. Only then is this followed by looking at the room or possible space we will have to work with."

Ensure that a detailed brief is drawn up and that it encompasses everything you will need; a layout you like, practical materials, worksurfaces, appliances and even the lighting – this will help the designer to get it absolutely right. Remember to take along your room's measurements – if you don't feel confident yourself, arrange a site visit. They will then draw up a 2D plan of your new cook zone or even a realistic CAD (computer-aided design), based on the brief and space available.

You can then alter anything you are unhappy with and smooth out design glitches. Take care, too, over details. Taps, sinks, appliances and handles are often not given the attention they deserve but will make a big difference to the final result.

Set yourself a realistic budget that you and the designer are both happy with. After a final plan and costings have been set, you will get a confirmation of your order and a holding deposit may be expected at this stage.

Plus, don't forget to check whether the company is still committed to customer service even after you have paid the bill. Concludes Neil Lerner, owner of and designer at Neil Lerner, "We always make a visit to check that both the client and ourselves are satisfied that the desired result has been achieved. Seeing a finished kitchen that's shiny, new, sleek and streamlined is an experience that never fails to excite."



above In addition to practicality, lighting can make a dramatic statement, as in this SL505 kitchen. In Truffle Brown pine veneer with a thick Jura Yellow limestone surface, it costs £25,000, at SieMatic. Tel: 01438 369327. www.siematic.co.uk

left Careful planning and open discussions with a designer can result in a striking creation, such as this Bridge kitchen. In Brazilian sukupira wood, Black Matt Metal and Bronze Metal laminate plus a washable fabric that covers the shelves and drawers, prices are on request, at Armani Casa. Tel: 020 7079 1930. www.armanicasa.com