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04



Measure of success

Unleash the full potential of your space by investing in a custom-made kitchen that will make the most of every inch

Words: Ysanne Brooks





Previous page (p45): Conceived to offer complete freedom of design, this ultra-modern Boffi_Code kitchen combines artisanal craftsmanship with state-of-the-art production to allow for plenty of customisation, ensuring that each project using this made-to-measure concept is unique. Prices start at £100,000.

Above: Featuring a rich combination of materials, this bespoke design by Davonport, from £35,000, brings together an array of textures and unusual finishes including concrete, sandblasted hardwoods and hand-stitched fabric with deep blue cabinetry and a striking granite splashback.

We're increasingly investing in quality craftsmanship. Of course handmade products often have a heftier price tag, but just as we're willing to pay more for a tastier loaf from an artisan bakery, an original piece of fine art, or indeed a bespoke kitchen, we're recognising that it's not just the price you pay that matters; it's what you're getting for your money.

"It's fair to say that you typically pay more for a bespoke kitchen compared to an off-the-shelf design, but the investment means you get a high-quality kitchen, unique to you," says Adrian Stoneham of Stoneham Kitchens. "Off-the-shelf kitchens are cheaper as they are mass-produced and there is generally less scope to adapt to your particular tastes as the choice of finishes and cabinet sizes is often limited."

Investing in craftsmanship

Much like a Savile Row suit, a bespoke kitchen will generally cost more because experts in their field make it to your specific needs, using the best materials available. Compact rooms, unusual architecture, uneven

walls and awkward spaces can all be accommodated by a bespoke kitchen designer, who could help to save money in the long run by creating a design that's exactly fit for purpose and built to last.

Many high-end kitchen companies specialising in unique, hand-built cabinetry will also have two or three 'in-house' styles, usually including a variation of Shaker and a modern flat-fronted high-gloss or matt door, which can be adapted and built to suit any space down to the last millimetre. While not bespoke in the truest sense, with so many decisions to be made when buying a new kitchen it can be a very useful base on which to build and will still deliver an individual kitchen designed without compromise.

Starting the journey

Finding a bespoke or made-to-measure company isn't tricky, there are lots around, but it's worth researching carefully to avoid places that profess to offer a bespoke service but that actually use standard-sized cabinetry combined with fillers to make them fit. Recommendations from friends and

family are ideal, or ask to look at some of a company's previous projects to get a feeling for what it produces. If a kitchen is truly bespoke, it's unlikely your designer will say no to any specific requirements – within reason of course. Most importantly of all, don't rush the process. Take time to visit at least two or three showrooms, talking to designers and getting a feel for how the company operates.

High-end glossy magazines and the internet are also good sources of information and inspiration. "If buying a pure bespoke kitchen, find a company local to you, as it is usual to have a number of design meetings before the project is finalised, and close contact between the designer and the customer is a must," advises Darren Taylor of Searle & Taylor. "Look at a company's website and view its designs to see if anything fits with your own ideas, and also take a look at its client testimonials, as these are a very good way of gauging the company's reputation."

Many bespoke furniture makers will have workshops you can visit to see their operation in action. "It is a real treat for clients to walk into our workshop and see our craftsmen at their benches, smell the wood and see their

own unique design being made by people who take great pride in their work," agrees Martin Holliday of Chiselwood.

Talk it over

A good bespoke maker will talk to potential customers at length about the look they want for their kitchen and how they plan to use it. Some will ask customers to complete a questionnaire before they start designing. This way they get to fully understand their individual needs.

Getting the brief right is key. Before you visit a company to get a quote (see Money matters, p49), make a list of things you like and dislike and gather together images of schemes and materials you'd like to include. Magazines are a useful source of information and websites such as Pinterest are a great place to keep all the things you love or want in one place to show prospective designers. A good designer will always arrange to visit you at home to get a feel for the space and measure up before they start on a design, but it's a good idea to take rough dimensions and even architects' plans along to your first meeting and let them know about any issues, such as windows or boilers that can't be moved.

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Above: This contemporary grey stained oak bespoke kitchen from Edmondson Interiors features floor-to-ceiling cabinets that make the most of every inch of space. Draped in stunning mottled granite worktops, the eye-catching island features light-reflecting bronze tinted mirror doors on one side. Prices start at £35,000.



Left: It's often the little touches that help make a kitchen unique, including personalised interior solutions, cabinetry built to fit around appliances exactly and a hand-painted finish in a favourite shade. This bespoke Lewis Alderson & Co kitchen is painted in Mortar and True Taupe by Little Greene. Prices are from £36,000.

Below: Brasserie is the latest made-to-measure kitchen from Smallbone of Devizes and available in any finish, giving almost endless options. Here, the owners chose a seamless bronze frame, with precision-cut apertures and handmade walnut drawer boxes. Prices start at £45,000.



Opposite page, top left: Awkward spaces and unusual architectural features are meat and drink to good bespoke designers. This kitchen by DeVOL sits in a huge oak-framed converted cowshed and has been created to complement the room's proliferation of exposed timber. Prices for a DeVOL kitchen start from £8000.

Bottom: The owners of this kitchen wanted to keep the island in place while adding extra furniture to create a space with heaps of individuality – a perfect brief for a bespoke company. The resulting cabinetry, designed and built by Mowlem & Co, is wrapped in an unusual textured vinyl fabric and features bespoke bronze matt lacquer handles. Prices are from £30,000.



Money matters

What should you expect from a quote from a bespoke kitchen company?

Visiting several showrooms will give a broad idea of price points and what's on offer. Once you have seen a few, narrow it down to your favourites and get detailed designs and quotes from two or three to allow you to compare both prices and a variety of design ideas. "I always encourage clients to look elsewhere, as they then have a cost to measure us against. A new kitchen is generally a very big expense, so it makes absolute sense to receive a quote from more than one company. However, make sure they're like-for-like quotes, as quality is all-important," says Darren Taylor of Searle & Taylor. "A quote should cover everything, including the cost of installation. We fully itemise ours to incorporate appliances, worktops and accessories so that the customer can see exactly what they are paying for down to the last penny."

Good quotes will also include any extra architectural services necessary and electrical or lighting work to be undertaken. Also expect 2-D or 3-D schematics of your plan so you can see how it will look and samples of materials too. "We always prepare photorealistic CAD drawings and samples to accompany any 2-D plans and elevations for clients," says Robert Burnett at Holloways of Ludlow. "They bring the designs to life and ensure that the client understands exactly what they will get before we start manufacturing." Be aware that there is often a charge for designs, which will be offset against the cost of the kitchen when you proceed with that company.

Once you have agreed a design and an installation date is confirmed a deposit will usually be required. How much you're asked to pay to kick-start production varies, but your kitchen supplier should set out payment dates clearly to ensure there's no confusion. "Most companies request a 40-50% deposit in advance and the final payment is usually due just before the proposed delivery and fitting date. Installation is paid for separately upon completion and sign off from the customer," adds Darren Taylor.





Left: In this kitchen, rather than leave the bay free of cabinetry to avoid fitting an awkward space, Roundhouse designers have made the most of the view it offers by fitting a row of Metro bespoke cabinets into it topped by a sink. Prices start at £35,000.

Below: Designed and created in the UK, this kitchen by Mark Taylor Design features a uniquely shaped island with an angled copper base and copper sheeted plinths. Topped with deep-profiled Calacatta marble, the island and the matching run of flat-fronted cabinetry are both painted in Little Greene's James shade. Prices start at £30,000.



Right: This Bulthaup kitchen from Kitchen Architecture was designed by Roselind Wilson Design to incorporate its clients' love of modern materials such as metal, timber and marble into this grand high-ceilinged space whilst also ensuring that it functioned efficiently. Price available on application.

Below left: Tim Jasper designed this industrial kitchen for an 18th-century townhouse. It features hand-painted cabinets with both pewter and limed oak work surfaces. The island incorporates a small prep sink and the pewter open shelves are illuminated by LED lighting. Kitchens start at £25,000.

Below right: Designed for practical family living and entertaining on a large scale using a mixture of materials, this Lincolnshire manor house kitchen by Chiselwood, from £35,000, features a large central island with circular preparation and eating area and a freestanding semi-circular purple drum pantry.



Complete control

Keeping an eye on what you spend and when is essential for a smooth-running project.

- ✓ While a bespoke kitchen is not a cheap option, that doesn't mean you should throw budgeting out of the window. Make sure you're clear about your top spend from the very beginning of the design process. "Ask the kitchen designer to explain where the costs are so you can make a completely informed decision where to compromise to stay within your ideal budget and spend your money wisely on furniture. As Benjamin Franklin said, 'the bitterness of poor quality lasts long after the sweetness of low price has been forgotten'," advises Richard Davonport.
- ✓ With so much on offer when you buy bespoke it can be easy to get carried away adding extras here and there. Deciding to add drainer grooves to a worktop at a later stage, for example, may seem like a great idea, but remember it will be an extra cost on the original quote. "If you have a budget in mind from the start make sure you keep track of it and document what are you spending as you go," advises Adrian Stoneham of Stoneham Kitchens.
- ✓ Remember, if your kitchen company is just making and dry-fitting your kitchen you'll need to budget for any extra work including costs for architects, flooring, plumbing and lighting in your final calculation.
- ✓ Make sure you know what monies are due and when, and always check with your kitchen company if it's not clear, as confusion over payments could at the best cause embarrassment and at worse stop the project in its tracks.
- ✓ With large projects it's recommended to set aside a contingency budget, particularly if the kitchen is part of a large renovation or an extension. At least 15% will cover most eventualities.

Above: The beauty of a bespoke design is that every inch can be tailored to your needs, from compartmentalised utensil drawers and fit-for-purpose larders to concealed cabinets and lighting features. The TM Italia bespoke Concept T45 EVO kitchen is priced from £50,000 at Hub Kitchens.

Below: Packed with individual elements, such as the handles crafted by blacksmith Ged Kennett, this solid tulipwood hand-painted kitchen by Searle & Taylor also features distinctive walnut pieces such as a drum cabinet and breakfast bar. A similar kitchen would cost approximately £70,000.



Right: For this modern open-plan house the client had very specific storage and appliance requirements. A wall was built to accommodate the Gaggenau ovens and wine storage unit, while the outsized island incorporates a long run of made-to-measure units as well as hobs, sink and a space for barstools. Poggenpohl kitchens cost from £30,000.

Below: Whatever the shape or size of room, a bespoke kitchen will be created to sit comfortably within that space, making it a worthwhile investment. Middleton worked with the narrow width in this kitchen, installing a compact island and solving any storage issues with a pair of shallow-depth armoires. Kitchens start from £25,000.

Opposite page: With an off-the-peg kitchen design, this set of stairs could have proved a problem that could only be solved with fillers. However, using bespoke Form 2 cabinets, designers at Sola Kitchens have been able to create useful storage that fits the contours of the steps perfectly. Sola Kitchens designs start at £35,000.



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"It's vital that I can come home to a fabulous space where I can create new delicious healthy dishes"

I spend a lot of time in my kitchen! Being an athlete, food and nutrition come high up on the list of importance. It's vital that I can come home to a fabulous space where I can create new delicious healthy dishes morning, noon and night. The kitchen is where I can relax, turn on some music, talk to my wife and cook up a storm! A light, bright and spacious kitchen with lots of room to store all my favourite appliances ensures I'm able to give my all every day.

Kate Richardson-Walsh



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