



kitchen notes

Linda Willems looks at the
latest design trends and innovations
for the heart
of the home...

When renovating or designing a home from scratch, there is a plethora of planning considerations clamouring for attention. But increasingly the kitchen is getting the lion share of the budget and planning time, as interest in cooking and the kitchen's role in family life grows again.

With a wealth of new technology and design trends on offer, it can be a challenge to know where to start, and Christchurch-based designer Ingrid Geldof says it's important to address the kitchen early on. "I encourage people to think about the shape of the kitchen even before they see an architect and if they are planning to work with a kitchen designer, the earlier the better.

"We always spend time getting a good brief from the client and it's often not until you ask the questions that they start to think about what

they need. It's important to consider who will be using the kitchen and what they want to do in there. If budget is an issue, people can spend some time doing the homework themselves."

According to Warren Laing, Manager of the Kitchen Division at Matisse, our evolving use of kitchens has impacted on design.

"Kitchens are not hugging the walls so much now. Islands have become a place where people can congregate, not only for the preparation of food: the kids can do their homework; people can come round for coffee or sit and read a newspaper. Some kitchens have two islands, and increasingly people are incorporating proper seating, rather than perching on bar stools."

One of the first things to consider when planning a kitchen is how much space you require, and you may also want to leave room for a



Islands remain a popular feature

trend that is growing in popularity: the walk-in pantry, or scullery.

"They can be used for storage or as a functioning mini kitchen," says Ingrid. "The main kitchen tends to be used every day, as it interacts with the living area, but the pantry is useful when preparing food for entertaining."

Warren says there's also a growth in integration of appliances into units and bench tops for a seamless look. "They might be teppanyaki or induction plates, or heating plates in shelving. We also have a new form of extraction that only rises up when it's in use."

It appears our love affair with technology is increasing with more appliances in kitchens than ever before. Warren says this could include steamers, combi-microwaves and coffee machines.

"Wine fridges are also becoming more standard with multi-zones so the reds, whites and champagnes can be stored at different temperatures," he says. "We are also seeing that multi-zoning in standard food fridges with different temperatures and humidities for fish, vegetables etc."

Ingrid Geldof believes design is becoming more adventurous, but says we're still a long way from turning our backs on popular neutral shades.

"We are beginning to explore form and shape more and we are seeing more curvaceous shapes, also more colour and texture. When I say colour, people think 'bright' but it might mean more timber or wood. The kitchen may be understated in natural tones, or white, but the wood adds some interest and brings in texture too.

"Or you can introduce texture in the splashback – instead of using a single piece of glass we might go back to using tiles. You can even have a pattern printed on glass and that's a win/win situation: easy to clean and texture."

"People are also introducing natural elements," says Warren, "like timber or stone to bring in texture and we are seeing materials combined, e.g. bench tops that have timber inset into stainless steel or stone.

"Lighting is also really important from an aesthetic and functional point of view, with shelving that allows light through so you can illuminate the whole cabinet, or lighting above the work surfaces."

He adds: "We are also selling furniture to match people's kitchens, as they want to integrate the look or feel. For example, if they choose grey oak in the kitchen, they might also have grey oak in the dining room, or introduce shelving in that finish."

While commercial kitchens are a far cry from most domestic versions, the planning can be fairly similar.

Chef Peter Thornley has just overseen a \$1 million kitchen refit at Auckland restaurant Kermadec and says there are key elements to consider.



Lighting can be both aesthetic and functional



"It's important to consider who will be using the kitchen and what they want to do in there."

"You need to design a kitchen that can cope with the style of food you want to cook," says Peter. "But remember, the tools allow the chef to be creative – never let the equipment drive the chef."

"The equipment available now is phenomenal and it's no longer so expensive to fulfil a dream."

Aesthetics are important to Peter too. "I like to design a kitchen that is easy on the eye. If I am spending a long time in an environment, I want it to be tactile, user friendly, and not all stainless steel like an operating theatre."

Peter gets around this in the Kermadec kitchen by stacking his beautifully patterned Japanese china on the shelves, and by keeping glass jars of spices on display.

Having completed the restaurant revamp his thoughts are now turning to the wish-list for the kitchen at his new house in the Bombay Hills.

"I would put in one of those self-cleaning ovens. They are incredible and what you can cook is amazing. I would put chrome grills in the work surface as nothing sticks to them, they come up bright and shiny – I like a clean kitchen – and they sit flush."

He is also a big fan of the new Fisher & Paykel CoolDrawer and admits: "I wouldn't put in any more upright fridges." But while he embraces the latest innovations, Peter also has a healthy respect for tradition.

"I want a pizza oven – technology is great but you also need a bit of romance and there is nothing like cooking on an open fire."

Other items on Peter's wish list include two sinks, "the biggest butler's pantry you can afford", and both induction and gas hobs.

"I would definitely put in a very small vacuum packer," he adds. "If you

2009 key trends

- Walk-in pantries/sculleries
- Integrated appliances for a seamless kitchen finish
- Self-cleaning ovens and combi-ovens (offering convection, steam and combination cooking)
- Induction cookers
- Timber finishes to add colour and texture
- LED lighting around cabinetry and bench tops

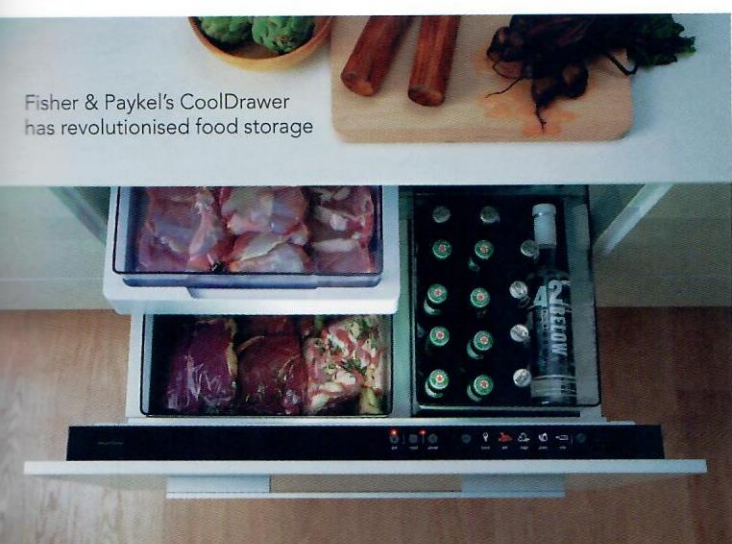
have a big budget, I'd recommend a blast chiller/freezer as it allows preserving to be done quickly and simply; great if you have a big garden or orchard."

His new kitchen will also boast a wine cellar for 1000 bottles and there won't be any rifling through drawers stuffed with utensils for a potato peeler – instead, narrow drawers under the work surface will each have 15 compartments containing a single tool.

Finally, two rubbish compactors will eliminate overflowing bins: one for normal waste and the other for food scraps so they can be added to keen gardener Peter's compost heap.

For those who aspire to technological wizardry in the kitchen, Kermadec's kitchen is a veritable wonderland. Neatly stacked along the walls are bakery ovens from Alsace (which cost more than a small car), an anti-griddle that cooks at -190C, "great for searing salmon, or

Fisher & Paykel's CoolDrawer has revolutionised food storage



scallops and making lollipops!", and low-temperature ovens that retain nutrients in food. Then there are smoke guns that can smoke pheasants and other dishes as they arrive at a customer's table, rows of syringes and a dehydrator that can turn a piece of finely sliced capsicum into a crispy wafer so thin it is translucent. Swirling vapours rise from a bowl of liquid nitrogen, which is central to creating Kermadec's signature dessert, the Nitro Raspberry Balloon.

As evidenced above, Peter believes culinary technology has progressed to such a high level that kitchen appliances now need to be viewed in an entirely different way. "I would like to see some serious cooking equipment at Big Boys Toys this year, what man would be able to resist going in the kitchen then?"

Designing the future

The last few years have seen huge strides in appliance technology, revolutionizing restaurant and home kitchens. One of those innovations is the IZONA CoolDrawer by Fisher & Paykel. The world's first multi-temperature drawer, it took seven years to develop. Fisher & Paykel's Head of Design, Mark Elmore, says while they are continuously improving existing products, other projects start with a clean sheet of paper and a discussion around what customers could need in five to 10 years.

"The IZONA CoolDrawer was one of those long-term projects," says Mark, "and started with us talking to the kitchen industry and understanding the changing patterns of customers' lifestyles. We knew people were entertaining at home more and that open plan kitchens were increasingly common. We knew drawers were popular and we thought, 'What if we had another drawer that kept food cold or could store food for a long time?' Then we thought, 'What if you didn't have to see those drawers, if they took on the look of the rest of the kitchen?'"

The result is the CoolDrawer, which can be placed anywhere in the home and can take on different skins to match other cabinetry. Each drawer can be set at five specifically designed temperatures, ranging from ambient (for pantry items) and cool, through to frozen.

At Electrolux, designers take their cue from a range of factors: a socio-political trend, such as a desire for more efficient appliances; or the opportunity to solve a problem consumers have with a current appliance. Deborah Kerslake, Electrolux Consumer Insight Manager, reveals: "Despite most ovens having five to 12 cooking functions, our research showed most people only use two or three. They simply didn't understand what the rest were for.

"The Electrolux 'Intuitive Oven Interface' (IOI) resulted directly from this research. It's so simple to use the manual is virtually redundant. A built-in guide to oven functions, the use of words instead of symbols and separate areas for the clock and oven programming were the answer. For users it means less frustration and better results because they're selecting the best cooking function for the dish they're making."

Busy lifestyles and desire for more free time has also impacted on product design, leading to popular self-cleaning ovens that use high temperatures to turn food particles to dust. Easy to clean induction cookers are also increasingly sought after.

For both Fisher & Paykel and Electrolux, environmental factors remain an important consideration: Electrolux developed a 430-litre fridge that uses less electricity in a year than running a 50 watt bulb for the same amount of time.

But despite our desire to care for the climate, we still hanker after something that will look good in our kitchens.

Electrolux Design Director, Lars Erikson, admits: "People today expect more out of products than just the basic functionality. They want...the emotional experience." ●