



2019 Kitchen Report:
100 years in UK
kitchen design

To gain an insight into kitchen design, the role of the kitchen in our busy modern lives and attempt to guess how this crucial space could look in the future, Formica Group commissioned a UK-wide survey of 2,000 people questioning their use of the “heart of the home”.

Respondents aged 18 and above were questioned on how they use their kitchens, where they source design inspiration and to understand both the pain points and positive features of their spaces.

The report combines the survey results with an assessment of past kitchen trends and a look to the

future, offering a fascinating glimpse into how a space that is losing ground amidst a nationwide housing crisis and battle for space is a leading example of creativity, resilience and adaptability in design.

The invention of the chimney brought open-fire cooking indoors around the 16th century and, ever since, the kitchen has been the bustling engine room of many homes. Having spent a few centuries as a dirty, smoky room kept to the back of the house and largely avoided by the upper classes, in the second half of the 20th century the kitchen underwent numerous transformations in style, purpose and function, in many ways reflecting the changing attitudes of the generations that cooked, ate and socialised there.



From the 50s to the 70s, the dining room fell out of favour and convenience was key as more and more women took up full time work. Time saving inventions, from the microwave to instant noodles, as well as increasing wealth and access to appliances such as dishwashers, brought families out of the kitchen and into the living room with TV dinners.

From open fires to open plan

1930

1950



1970



1940

More people, less space

Despite the evolving role of the kitchen and its increasing multifunctionality, kitchen sizes have not reflected these changes. With kitchen floor space peaking at 15.37sqm in the 1960, UK kitchens today are on average just 12.61sqm - the same as in the 1940s.



1960

Kitchen sizes have not reflected their increasing multifunctionality.

At 15.73sqm in the 1970s, kitchens today average just 12.61sqm

By the 90s, the kitchen had regained its status as the centre of the home; chefs like Jamie Oliver inspired quick, healthy cooking; large worktops and breakfast bars brought family and friends into the kitchen to socialise as well as eat; and design trends focused on neutral tones, far removed from the bold colours and prints of the 60s, 70s and 80s. This trend has continued into the 21st century, with today's kitchens blending cooking, dining, utilities, entertaining and even outdoor space.



1990



2010



1980

2000

2020

With growing populations, rising prices and increasing demand for space, particularly in urban areas, contemporary homes (and those who inhabit them) are feeling the squeeze. In 2017, a studio flat in Croydon, South East London, offered just 14.9sqm of floor space, despite government guidelines advising a minimum of 37sqm. This cramped Croydon home is just one example of the UK's shrinking homes, which are the smallest in Europe (Cambridge Uni).

It's here that the creativity and adaptability of human beings combine with modern technology to inspire trends and change the face of kitchens; today's homeowners are finding innovative ways to do more with less, shaping the future of kitchen design.



You'll always find them in the kitchen at parties...

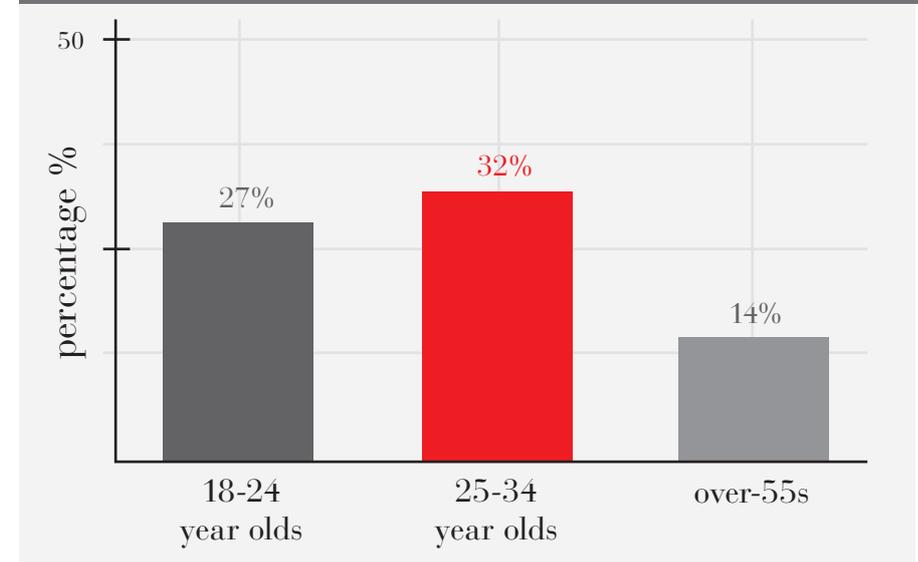
Using kitchens to entertain guests is more popular with young people.

From the survey results, today's kitchen is clearly seen as a multipurpose, multifunctional space, particularly among the younger people surveyed. 72% of 18-24 year olds and 65% of 25-34 year olds reported cooking as the activity they mainly used their kitchens for, compared to 90% of 45-54 year olds and 96% of those over 55. Significant numbers of younger respondents (27% of 18-24 year olds and 32% of 25-34 year olds) listed entertaining guests and spending time with family as secondary uses of their kitchen space, although only 14% of the over-55s agreed.

As well as socialising, 17% of 25-34 year olds reported using their kitchen "for work/studying", compared to 9% of 45-54 year olds and just 7% of those over 55, again suggesting a clear divide in the way the different generations use their kitchens.

There was little discrepancy between the genders regarding the primary use of the kitchen. Of 1,131 female and 869 male respondents, 91% of women and 88% of men reported using their kitchens mostly for cooking, with eating, (41% of women, 37% of men), entertaining guests (23% of women, 13% of men) and spending time with family (27% of women, 15% of men) as secondary functions.

Again, the survey results suggest that rather than the traditional idea of a "woman's space" hidden at the back of the home, in 2019 the kitchen is the bustling social hub of the home,



equally shared by men and women. Much as time saving technology took over the kitchen in the 1970s, the kitchen continues to evolve with—and in many ways mirror—societal changes.

Simpler, smaller, smarter by design

Our survey results so far clearly suggest that, for young people (who are key drivers of trends) in particular, the kitchen is increasingly becoming a space with a wide variety of functions and a significant role in home life. This seems at odds with the fact that kitchens are getting smaller, begging the question: is kitchen size really that big an issue?

Looking at the frustrations reported by survey respondents regarding their kitchens, it's clear that the short answer is: yes.

Overall, a lack of storage space (30%) and not enough food preparation areas (25%) emerged as the leading problems faced by those questioned. When expanding on their answers, 62 of the 105 responses given referenced kitchen size, with "it's too small" and "not enough space" repeatedly mentioned, and similar responses such as "no space for a table" and "crowded with more than one person [in it]" compounding this.

As well as gathering opinions on the kitchens the respondents have, the survey also assessed the aspirations of those questioned - what kind of kitchen do they want? When asked "Which is more important, the look and design or functionality of your kitchen?", 55% of respondents said both, 34% preferred functionality, 7% opted for look and design and 2% chose neither.

Similarly, when asked the reasons behind their most recent kitchen renovations, 54% said "to address wear and tear", followed by 35% who overhauled the room "so that it functions better", while 31% of respondents cited "for a change of style" as the reason. Addressing wear and tear (such as refreshing kitchen worktops or maintenance to keep the room in good working order) and functioning "better" were the primary concerns of those updating their kitchens.

It's clear from the results that respondents want their kitchens to look good and work well, with traditional design "styles" of decreasing importance as individual preference and user requirements take precedence. When asked to choose their favourite kitchen style, a leading popular style was hard to pin down; modern edged into the lead with 23% of responses, followed by country/farmhouse/shaker styles (18%), traditional (11%) and contemporary (11%). Mediterranean, minimalist and industrial were all preferred by less than 4%, while "I don't have a favourite" was chosen by 19% of respondents.

Evidently, there is no leading interior design "style"; nowadays a variety of tastes are in demand and subsequently catered for by today's retailers. This suggests the kitchen of the future won't be built around a "look", as such, rather it'll be highly tailored to individual needs, lifestyle and personal preferences.

The demand for housing in the UK means developers are building more homes in less space, thus making "hyperdensity" (where there are between 350 and 1,000 dwellings per hectare) the new norm in many UK cities and, naturally, those houses are smaller. Our survey results show that, although they find the lack of space a serious issue, people are adapting their small kitchens to function better, whilst still placing some value on aesthetic appeal.

When it comes to owners' favourite features in their existing kitchens, 17% of those who answered, mentioned either their worktop, breakfast bar or central island. The latter two are perhaps popular due to the extra storage and dining space they offer.

How, then, are designers, retailers and homeowners finding ways to make the UK's tiny kitchens both comfortable and functional?

The demand for housing in the UK means hyperdensity is the new norm

Emerging trends, diverging inspiration

The 2017 John Lewis Retail Report: How We Shop, Live and Look (John Lewis) identified highly personalised, yet compact, spaces as a rapidly emerging trend.

The report notes a 15% rise in home storage sales, including a 33% increase in modular boxes for stow-away storage, again showing how shoppers are looking for smart ways to make small spaces function as a busy, cluttered home yet look sleek and tidy. The report also found customers are taking time to "seek out pieces for the home that will best express their personality" but are also "cautious, sourcing a few new pieces to set their rooms apart".

John Lewis' sales of connected home tech rose 160% in 2017, with washing machines, fridges, ovens and even blinds controlled by apps proving popular. One example of the increasingly bespoke nature of homes and appliances is AI coffee machines, which are "getting to know their owners and their individual preferences for flavour, strength and temperature".

A driving force behind emerging trends—for kitchen design and more broadly—is social media. Sites like Pinterest and Instagram offer aesthetically pleasing, collectable images that are accessible and inspiring for anyone. With a wealth of styles, looks and ideas to pique the interest of even the most diverse tastes, they offer a lot more scope and speed than traditional magazines and showrooms;

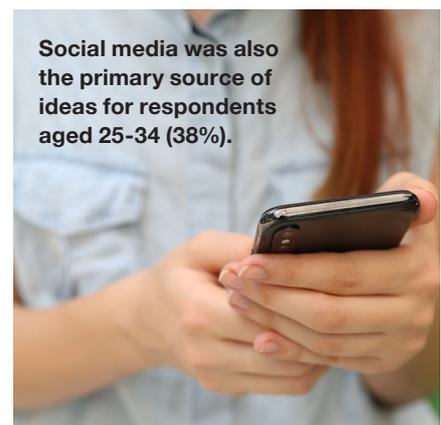
thanks to the speed of the digital world, blogs, boards and feeds are always at the cutting edge of every trend.

Unsurprisingly, the younger survey respondents are largely inspired by social media, including Instagram, Pinterest and bloggers. 54% of 18-24 year olds questioned cited social media as their main source of inspiration and it was also the primary source of ideas for respondents aged 25-34 (38%).

Asked to identify where they get their kitchen design inspiration from, overall 36% of our respondents said "no particular place". 36% said kitchen retailers and interior, 23% said magazines and newspapers, 15% said digital media and 12% said social media.



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Expert advice from Charles Bettes, Managing Director, Gpad London Ltd, an architecture and interior design practice.

"It's tempting to focus on how you want your kitchen to look, however thinking practically will make it more enjoyable to use. Think about what you use the most and in what way; prioritise the essentials and arrange your appliances accordingly."

"For a tiny kitchen, pre-planning down to the most minute detail is essential. Note down the height of things such as cereal boxes, glasses and appliances, and make sure cupboards and

shelves can accommodate them. Also think about socket locations and the number you need - you tend to need more than you think you will."

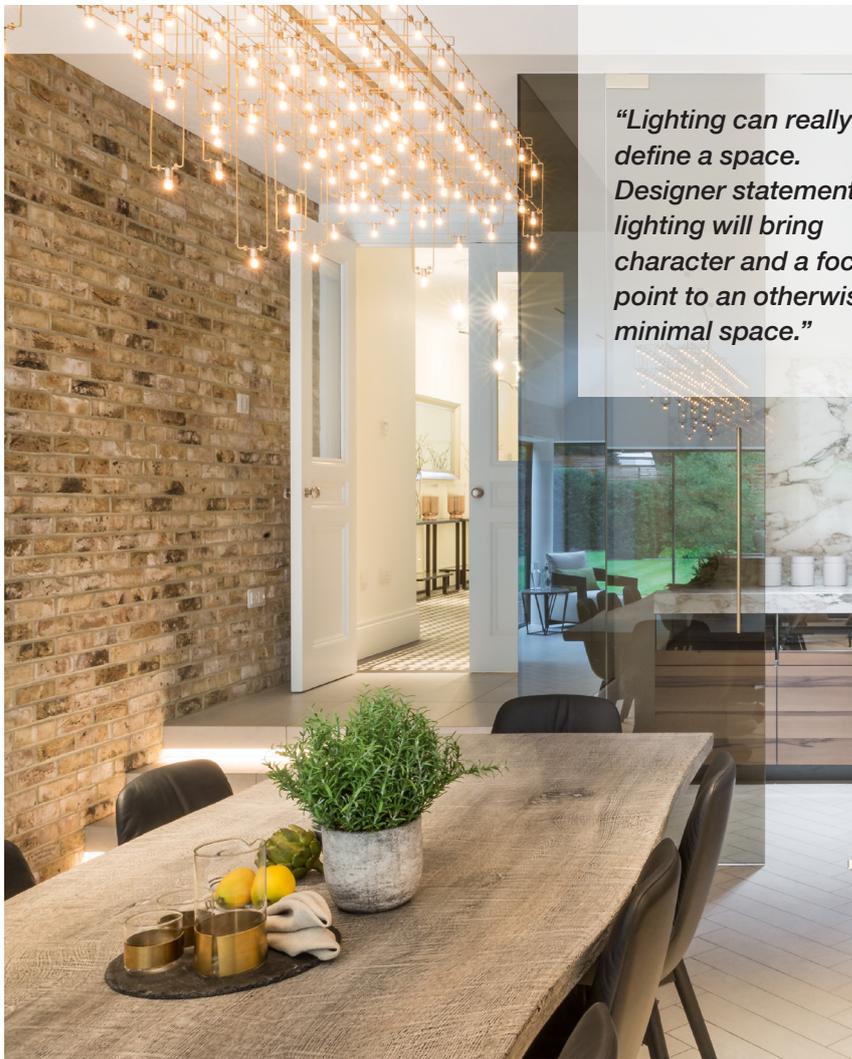
"Storage is key in the kitchen. In a compact one, shelving above worktops is often preferable to cabinets, as it gives you fully functional workspace below. You run the risk of it feeling claustrophobic if you have full depth cupboards above a worktop. Shelves also allow you to have fast access to items you need all the time; glasses, crockery etc."

BRUSH FACTORY
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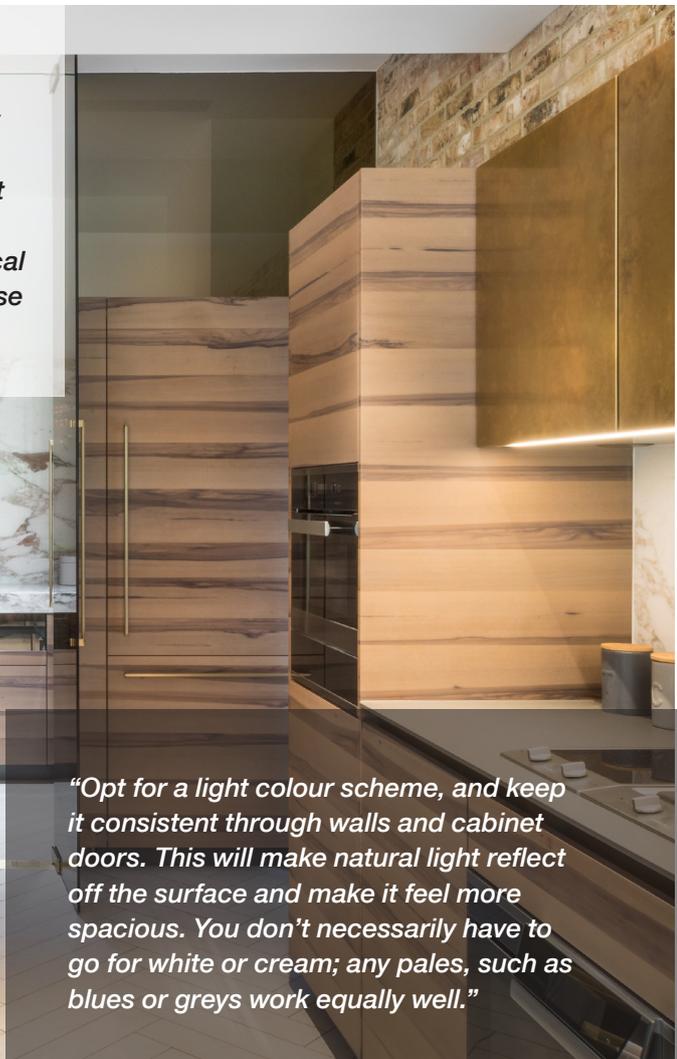
"Mirrors are another great way to create the illusion of space."

"If your kitchen is an awkward shape, you can square the room off with custom storage. Creating floor-to-ceiling storage may seem counterintuitive but it can result in cleaner lines and you will be able to hide any clutter and less attractive kitchen appliances."





“Lighting can really define a space. Designer statement lighting will bring character and a focal point to an otherwise minimal space.”



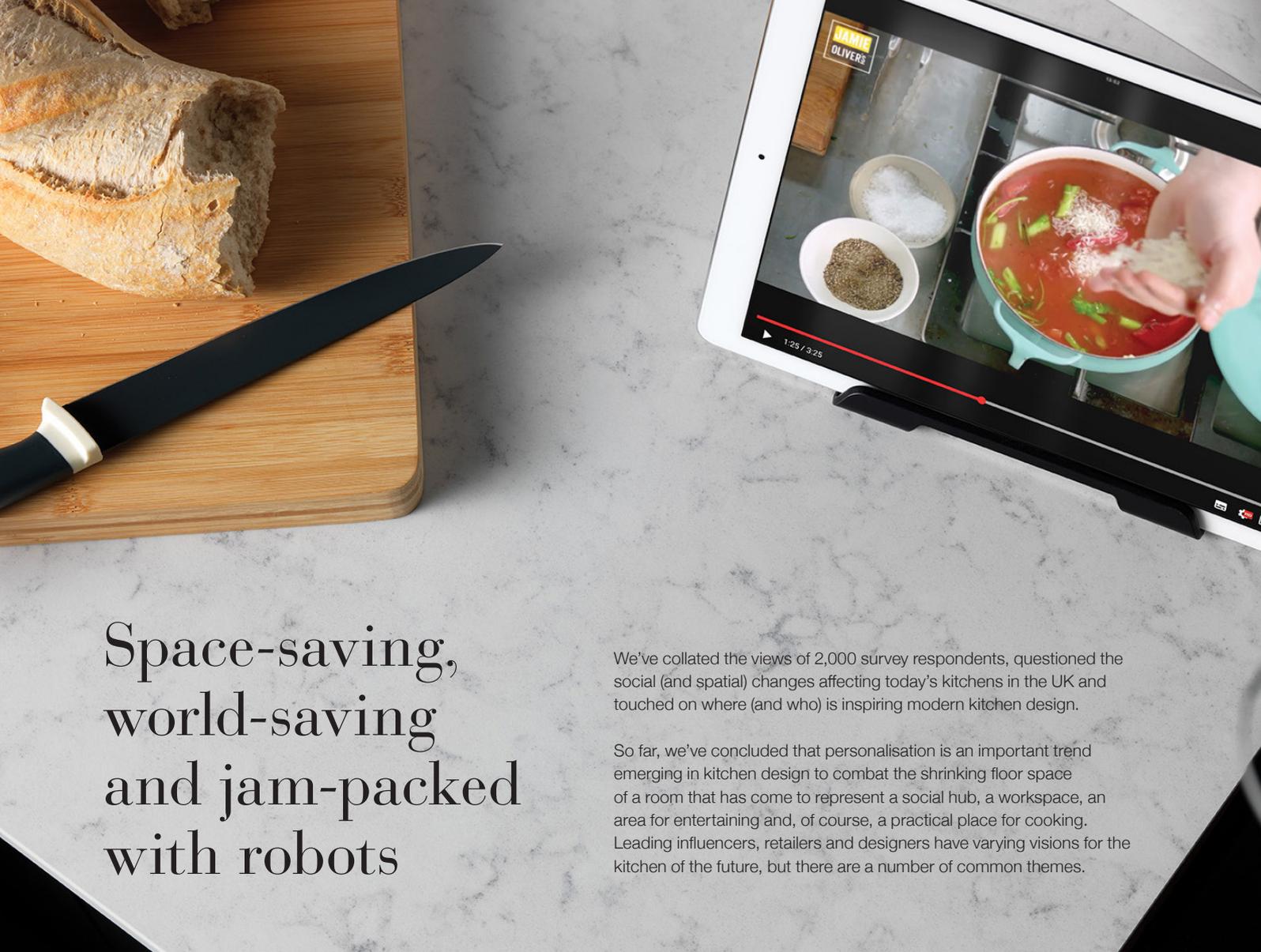
“Opt for a light colour scheme, and keep it consistent through walls and cabinet doors. This will make natural light reflect off the surface and make it feel more spacious. You don’t necessarily have to go for white or cream; any pales, such as blues or greys work equally well.”



“Alternatively, if your kitchen is tiny, go bold and creative.”

“The gap between units and the ceiling is wasted space. Where you need units, build them up to the ceiling. If you’re installing units above a worktop, go half-depth to maximise worktop space.”





Space-saving, world-saving and jam-packed with robots

We've collated the views of 2,000 survey respondents, questioned the social (and spatial) changes affecting today's kitchens in the UK and touched on where (and who) is inspiring modern kitchen design.

So far, we've concluded that personalisation is an important trend emerging in kitchen design to combat the shrinking floor space of a room that has come to represent a social hub, a workspace, an area for entertaining and, of course, a practical place for cooking. Leading influencers, retailers and designers have varying visions for the kitchen of the future, but there are a number of common themes.

Multifunctional

As part of Concept Kitchen 2025, Swedish furniture giant IKEA and design company IDEO created a full-size prototype kitchen in 2025 based on "the social, technological and demographic forces that will impact how we behave around food in 2025". The prototype included the "Table for Living", a smart surface that combines worktop, chopping board, smartphone and cooker, whilst also minimising waste.

A multifunctional space needs multi-functional surfaces which work harder and take up less space in smaller homes. Simply place a food item on the surface and a camera recognises the item, projecting recipes, cooking instructions and a timer onto the surface. It's also described as a "nifty solution for a smaller urban dwelling" as hidden induction coils can instantly heat or cool the surface, making it flexibly functional.

World-saving

Regardless of colour trends, the kitchen of the future is set to be green. IKEA's Concept Kitchen 2025 introduces a sink that encourages the user to be more conscious of water consumption with a pivoting basin that separates water based on use, for example drinking or washing the dishes. IKEA also took on recycling, offering a sink that could sort rubbish automatically, as well as crushing and vacuum packing it.

Minimising food waste was identified as a real worry for many surveyed in the Food Standards Agency's Our Food Future report and looks to be a target for the kitchen of the future. Alongside education campaigns and less wasteful production, at a household level refrigerators will one day reduce waste by adjusting temperatures to help food keep for longer, gadgets and appliances will be more energy efficient and bins will convert food waste into fertilizer (source).

AI that works for you

According to The Times' article Home smart home: the kitchen of the future, the future is the polar opposite of the 1950s appliance-heavy kitchen: "The future home is about tech disappearing." From AI features that turn your oven on as you head home from work and intuitive induction hobs to a fridge that can send you photos of its contents, every appliance will be connected by app, disappear seamlessly into the background and work to your personal preferences.

A lean, green, highly personalised, cooking/eating/working/entertaining machine...

The humble kitchen has come a long way from the days when it was dark, smokey and hidden away. From cramped beginnings, it has swollen to accommodate bigger homes, bigger families and bigger appliances, and now—despite shrinking again in terms of square footage—its role in the home has never been greater.

The future of the kitchen looks set to be built upon the core ideas of efficiency and effectiveness. Reducing waste and making food go further with smart surfaces, ensuring the room can quickly adapt from working kitchen to comfortable entertaining space and AI ensuring that every aspect of the kitchen is designed to suit the homeowner; the kitchen of the future will be super-slick and built for peak performance—even in the smallest homes.

Despite this, however, the theme of personalisation keeps reappearing. With the rise of smart appliances, connected apps and AI comes a level of personalisation never seen before; once a coffee machine can brew your favourite hot drink as soon as you wake up and the fridge can automatically order ingredients for chicken soup because of your vitals—which it reads from a connected smartwatch—the kitchen goes beyond tailored and “just how you like it”, into the hyper-personal. In the future, no two kitchens will be the same.

Of course, personal taste, financial constraints and living styles will impact the kitchen of the future and it’s impossible to guess how the kitchen of 2025 will look, let alone the kitchen of 2100. Further, this survey has only considered UK residents and Western trends;

different cultures and climates around the world make for drastically different kitchens than we know.

Finally, a potential backlash to the way technology has crept into every facet of modern life could be on the cards. With young people already showing a fondness for nostalgic hardware like Polaroid cameras and vinyl record players, food journalist Amanda Gold warns: “If cooking becomes such a guided process that you don’t have any emotion around it, you’re going to take the heart out of it.”

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