

Kitchen prediction

Will your kitchen still look good in another 10 years or will it be a design dinosaur? We asked the experts to identify the current and emerging trends that are set to last.

Words **Julia Nekich**

Any real estate agent will tell you that a tired and dated kitchen reduces the value of your home. But revamping this room can be expensive, so it's important not to fall for faddish looks that will become outdated by next year. We asked industry experts to give us the lowdown on the latest enduring design trends so you can avoid any costly mistakes.

The layout

Speak with any industry expert and they'll tell you that the most prominent design shift over the last decade has been the blurring of boundaries between the kitchen, dining and living areas – and even the outdoors. According to Lars Erikson, design director at Electrolux, more than 60 per cent of Australians now have open-plan kitchens and this trend looks set to continue.

But while you might be tempted by pictures in design magazines that show "open" kitchens with everything along one wall, experts warn against ignoring the classic kitchen "work triangle". This 1950s concept, which involves positioning your sink, cooktop and fridge at the three points of a triangle to maximise kitchen workability and efficiency, is still the preferred layout. For optimum ergonomics, each "side" of the triangle should be between four and seven metres in length.

The advent of other major kitchen appliances – such as dishwashers and microwaves – is challenging the classic work triangle, but experts say it's still a valuable tool in planning the efficiency of your kitchen design.



Efficient design

For maximum efficiency, design your kitchen with the "work triangle" in mind. Position your sink, fridge and cooktop at the three points of the triangle.

Water-friendly taps

Flick-mixer taps remain popular, but they're also becoming increasingly water efficient.

Social centre

An island bench provides an informal area for eating and socialising in the kitchen zone.

Streamlined cabinetry

Modern cabinet design has minimal detailing for a sleek finish.

Splashback

Splashbacks need to be easy to clean and either complement or contrast your colour scheme.

Benchtops

Deluxe surfaces such as natural stone, marble or engineered quartz will create a lasting modern look.

Easy integration

Even study nooks can be incorporated into today's open-plan kitchens.

Natural materials

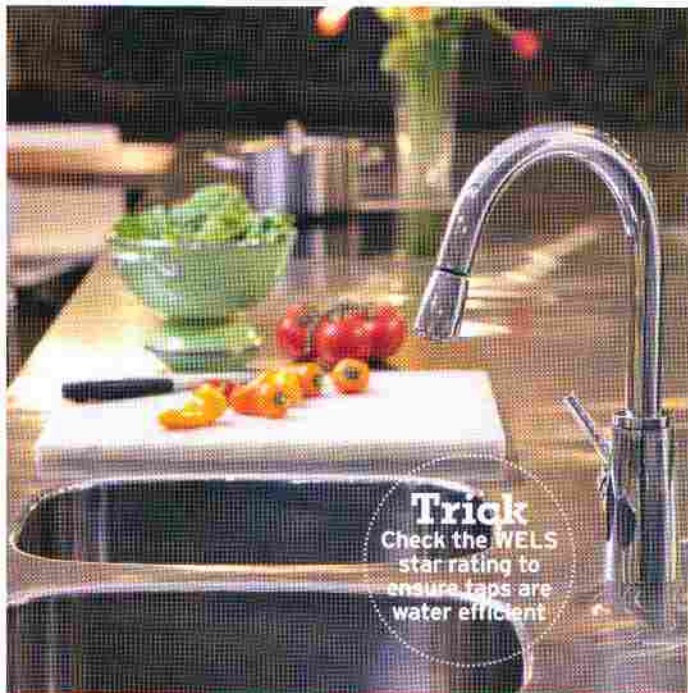
Timber is making a comeback in cabinetry and floors to reflect the wider environment.

Open-plan living

Your kitchen colours need to complement the furnishings in adjoining living spaces.

Storage solutions

Smart storage (and plenty of it) is crucial to minimise mess in an open kitchen.



Trick
Check the WELS
star rating to
ensure taps are
water efficient

Sinks & tapware

Round-edged sinks with draining boards are out, according to Robert Waite, architectural representative at sink and tapware manufacturer Abey Australia. "The price of stone benchtops has come down in recent years, so people make them a feature by mounting the sink underneath and doing away with a draining board," Robert says. "Manufacturers are carving grooves into the stone to create a natural, invisible draining area and

there's a big push towards dead-square sinks."

Eight out of 10 taps sold are flick mixers and the trend is here to stay, with a growing focus on water efficiency. The Federal Government's new mandatory Water Efficiency Labelling and Standards Scheme (WELS) gives a star rating based on water consumption, so consumers can choose the most water-efficient product available. For more information, visit www.waterrating.gov.au

Cabinetry

Open-plan kitchens mean you can't shut the door on mess, so storage is crucial. "Ten years ago, kitchens had more cupboards than drawers – now they're all drawers, except where necessary," says interior designer Sonia Simpfendorfer of Nexus Designs in Melbourne.

Once only for pots, deep drawers are now used for most under-bench storage. Dividers and plate holders can be built into drawers to stop things sliding around and pantry drawers provide

easier access to ingredients. Streamlined cabinetry with simple detailing also helps achieve a lasting look.

"Polyurethane cabinets are still popular, but with sleek, flat doors instead of moulded door fronts," says Nicola Onslow, an interior designer at Sydney's Design 33°S.

Natural materials such as timber veneer are also being revived, says Chris Knight, marketing products manager at Laminex. "There's a trend towards reflecting the wider environment."



Trick
Pull-out pantry
drawers give you
easy access to
ingredients



Trick
Add bold colours
to your walls but
keep permanent
features neutral

Colours

The recent trend towards assimilating the kitchen with other living spaces has also led to integrated colour schemes. "More than ever before, we're choosing cabinetry colours that are in keeping with the home's overall palette and style," says Danielle James, principal of Sydney interior design company Janssen James. For most of us, that means choosing neutral tones of white, cream or grey. However, lately, bold colour has been sneaking back into

the kitchen in the form of feature walls. "These are a big hit where the opportunity arises," Danielle explains. "They're either being painted with accent colours that link to the splashback, are tiled with large-format tiles or, for the more design-savvy, wallpapered [as long as it's protected from heat and water]." In the future, she predicts that even granites, quartzes and coloured marbles will be used as feature walls as texture becomes more popular.



Trick
Make benchtops
a little wider to
allow informal
dining

Benchtops

Your benchtop is the most obvious indication of whether your kitchen has passed its use-by date. If it's got round, bull-nose edges then it's probably starting to look dated. Thick, natural stone "slabs" will update your space. "These have emerged to create a luxury look, such as using Bianca Carrara marble for benchtops and island benches," says Danielle James. If you're worried about the maintenance, CaesarStone, an engineered

quartz-based product, has become popular as it is stain resistant, never needs resealing and can be cleaned with just warm, soapy water.

Large island benchtops are also growing in popularity – as long as you have the space. "Island benchtops are getting larger as family and friends are accommodated within the kitchen zone and eating at the kitchen bench is given more status than it's had before," Sonia Simpfendorfer explains.

Appliances

"People are spending more on good brands that are environmentally friendly and will last longer," says Nicola Onslow. "For instance, dishwashers that use less water, ovens that don't waste energy and fridges designed to make food last longer."

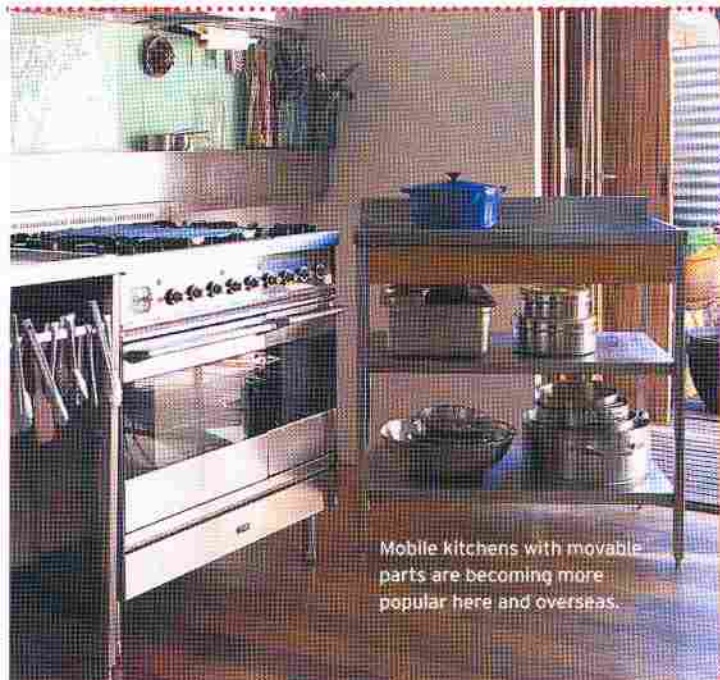
Glacel Lubrin, whitegoods category manager at LG Electronics, says fridges are advancing fast. "In our latest range we've created motors with less moving parts, which means less energy loss from friction," she says. "Advanced

technologies are also keeping foods fresher for longer and absorb interior odours."

Appliances no longer have to be white either. Now stainless-steel items take pride of place on the bench, while other appliances are kept out of sight – either behind cabinetry or built in. In fact, manufacturers in Europe are creating kitchens with floor-to-ceiling cabinetry that entirely conceals the oven, microwave, fridge and other small appliances, for a seamless, mess-free look.



Trick
Hide your
appliances behind
floor-to-ceiling
cabinetry for a
sleek finish



Mobile kitchens with movable parts are becoming more popular here and overseas.

FAST FORWARD TO 2016

We asked the experts to predict what we'll find in kitchens in 10 years' time:

ON THE MOVE: Kitchens are set to become mobile. "Built-in joinery will be replaced by freestanding furniture pieces – this is already common in Europe, where people are using sleek, freestanding cupboards that can be taken with them when they move," says Sonia Simpfendorfer.

OUTSIDE THE SQUARE: According to Lars Erikson, more kitchen appliances will

be coming outdoors, and with them entertainment pieces such as plasma TVs!

MAXIMUM IMPACT: Experts predict we'll see a backlash against the minimalist designs and colours that have been strong for the past few years. "Recently, we've pared it down. Over the next 10 years, we will 'decorate it back up' with interesting wallpapers, stones, light fittings and clever colour schemes with lots of personality," says Danielle James.

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