

the shape of things to come

EWA SHEPHARD OF FIRED EARTH EXAMINES WAYS TO FIT AN AWKWARD-SHAPED KITCHEN

It's easy to create a fabulous kitchen if you've got acres of space, but making something special out of a tiny or awkwardly-shaped room is a real test of skill.

The traditional dining room is gradually being replaced by a kitchen with space for a large table - an informal arrangement that is conducive to all manner of meals, from intimate dinners to festive occasions. But it is not always possible to create the perfect layout without a great deal of forward planning and use of ingeniously designed pieces of furniture.

Start with a level-headed assessment of your room. Is there anything you can do to make it larger or easier to work with? Moving or re-hanging doors, repositioning radiators and even knocking through partition walls can radically increase your layout options.

If your predilection is for the unfitted look, but you have a need to conquer the awkward spaces in your kitchen, search out manufacturers offering cleverly shaped pieces. One such item is in Fired Earth's solid French Oak 'Bastide' kitchen range, which will fit into a corner using up otherwise dead space, to provide you with not only a useful worktop area, but additional storage space beneath (available in painted cream or plain oak).

Cupboards on walls can make the room look cramped and cluttered. Opt instead for lots of storage in base units, or search out pieces of furniture not normally associated with a kitchen, such as a linen press or armoire, which will give much needed storage without the wasted space between base and wall unit.

Obviously this type of furniture is only suitable if you like the freestanding look - the ultimate in space saving and functional kitchens is of course fitted. This allows you to select built-in space saving gadgets and features: corner fridge/freezers, plinth storage cupboards, slimline dishwashers, small sinks and compact ovens and hobs.

Atag, a Dutch manufacturer with a name for high quality products, produces a range of mini hobs (the Domino which is only 29cm wide) and even a compact oven with a housing height of only 38cm



BASTIDE CORNER UNIT, FIRED EARTH

providing the health conscious foodie with a choice of microwave, combi-microwave, ordinary oven or steamer. Alternatively, Gaggenau, renowned for its highly reputable and reliable products, produces compact hobs (electric, gas or even an electric BBQ griddle!), built-in hob extractors which pop out of the base unit when needed, and compact ovens with steam and combi-microwave options, which can be coupled with a plate-warming drawer.

Utilise wall space for shelving and the most necessary piece of all: the wine rack! Choose tiles carefully to give the illusion of space, and don't immediately think 'small space, small tiles'; by changing the scale of the same colour or the tone of tile, the eye will almost certainly be fooled! Maximise light by using reflective surfaces, such as glass or polished stone for splashbacks and pale stone for floors.

Finally, don't be afraid to leave gaps and space - in a small room, this can give the impression of a larger area than is actually present.

Ewa Shephard is Fired Earth Interiors' Home Design Consultant for the South West, based at Darts Farm Village near Topsham, Exeter (tel: 01392-878252, open seven days per week, website: www.firedearth.com). The interior design service costs £150 per room, and includes a home visit with supporting presentation at the showroom (fee is fully refundable, subject to terms & conditions).

Suppliers:

Bastide Kitchen range - Fired Earth Interiors, Darts Farm Village, Topsham, Exeter Tel: 01392-878252.

Atag & Gaggenau - Bradshaw Appliances, head office Clevedon, Bristol on 01275 343000. For larger appliances contact Bradburys in Exeter on 01392 825940.

SANDSTONE KITCHEN, FIRED EARTH



TERRACOTTA WINE RACK