

kitchens today

COLOUR ME HAPPY!

EWA SHEPARD OF FIRED EARTH EXAMINES THE USE OF COLOUR IN THE KITCHEN

The human eye can see more than 16 million colours - that's a lot of colour mistakes just waiting to trip us up! But don't fret; decorating a space in terms of colour can be as easy as 60-30-10.

Don't believe me? Take a look at photos of interiors in magazines, you'll notice that the rooms you like the most are almost invariably divided into percentages of 60-30-10. Why this works is anybody's guess. Perhaps it is the human tendency to see an overall theme in the 60 per cent hue, unifying the colouration. The 30 per cent provides visual interest and the 10 per cent, not unlike jewellery, provides that little glint of sparkle!

Colour can affect the mood in a room and, with colour back in demand, the manufacturers of cabinets, appliances, flooring, wall tiles and counters - any surface in the kitchen - are offering more and more choices. Colour selections naturally come late in the design process, but it is an aspect which has a huge affect on our perception of the size and ambience of a room, so start looking around you as to what pleases your eye and how the colours or tones have been combined.



Today's colour schemes tend toward the coordination of colours and tones. But colours don't have to be an exact match from one item to another: adding lighter and darker tones or values of the same colour can add depth and a personal feel to a room rather than everything being 'matchy-matchy'. A light flooring colour will draw the floor up to the eye, while a darker floor tone will drop it away visually. If you have low ceilings or want to increase the visual height of your room, add a deeper floor colour - this is quite often in contradiction to what we are advised.

White has a high level of reflectivity, which is why it is the most frequent ceiling colour choice. But there are other options, such as yellow, which very effectively reflect light. Or you could select a light tone from your room scheme to tie the ceiling into the overall space. Dark colours by themselves don't make a room look smaller, but combined with light colours, they might: it's high-contrast colours that make a room feel smaller. The less contrast in a space, the larger it feels, whether the colours are all light or all dark.

You can create a successful colour palette for a space with anywhere from one to five colours. But limiting the number of colours doesn't mean you have to limit the range of values (tints or shades) within a room. You could use an even greater number, but you need to be aware that the more used within a space, the busier it can feel, which in turn can make it feel smaller.

Vary colours throughout linked rooms within your home as long as they come together in some form of accessory, fabric or furnishing. For instance, if you use three different paint colours in a semi-open-plan kitchen/living area, be sure to repeat those three in a patterned fabric in several of the areas - possibly even within the kitchen textiles we all gather: oven gloves, tea towels, etc. Once you see the colours all together, you will find that the paint colours make perfect sense.

Accent colours appear less frequently in a colour scheme but, as a result, often have the greatest effect. Used wisely, they are excellent for highlighting architecture and furnishings within a space.

While colour associations can differ from culture to culture (white, the colour of weddings in the UK, is the colour of mourning in Japan), there are associations that cross all cultures. Regardless of who you are or when you've lived in the history of mankind, when you look at the sky it's blue (which, coincidentally, was once viewed to be an 'antiseptic' colour and hence used in kitchens and bathrooms!).

Colour perception has a spectacular emotional effect on all people. Think of the Sistine Chapel: Michelangelo's use of colour is breathtaking, and the Japanese tourist will see it in the same way as the Norwegian tourist. The combination of those colours will produce the same emotional states.

Now, we can't all be Michelangelo, but with a bit of courage and planning we can be surrounded with something beautiful that we have created ourselves. So now, who's the talented artist?!

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