

Swinging the cat

Ewa Shephard examines the clutter-free life, and asks whether such an existence really is possible in a space-challenged kitchen?

Clutter. It's the bane of my life, especially in our kitchen, which at present, isn't large enough to swing the cat, let alone lovingly conjure up a feast of delight for family and friends. How to resolve this? In a dream world everything

is perfect, but most of us don't live in that alternate universe and real life is very different indeed!

With a little forethought and ingenuity, great solutions will appear. The ideal for many is to have a separate walk-in larder, fully shelved with everything in easy reach of your fingertips. Modern home design, and indeed modern usage of older homes, does not allow us this luxury – how about a full height armoire or linen press to house all those essentials? I am a huge fan of thinking outside of the box and coming up with uses for items of furniture designed for an altogether different requirement.

This idea can be utilised in both a modern as well as country kitchen, built-in or freestanding. Wonderful pieces are also available, fully fitted out for the need in hand, from many kitchen companies: look at the beautiful larder from the Piece Six collection by Thomas & Thomas, or the cute Bastide armoire from Fired Earth.

Storage of fresh produce is also a priority in this age of five-a-day. Keeping veg in tip-top condition is always a challenge in a centrally heated home (although the summer heat brings its own problems to vitamin retention). The ideal containers are breathable; in our dream walk-in larder we'd have wire baskets stacked up with a variety of produce. In our reality kitchen with little space, try using baskets or wicker drawers available from most department stores, which will provide the circulation of air essential for vegetables. I have even used hanging wicker baskets to provide this essential storage – available readily and cheaply from every garden centre – and they

look great too! Technology also takes up a great deal of space in the modern kitchen, and I don't just mean the food processor or juicer. The need to be entertained in every aspect of our lives has brought the television, the sound system and sometimes even the home computer into the ever-shrinking hub of the home. With so many solutions available to stop these intruding onto the workspace, we're spoiled for choice – sound systems and televisions can be attached under wall cabinets, even computers are built into fridge doors, and no doubt new suggestions appear every day.

In truth, nothing will ever fully make up for having a small kitchen, but with a little imagination – and a ruthless hand to eliminate clutter – we can live harmoniously with the bread board, blender and baked beans!

Ewa Shephard, formerly an interior designer for Fired Earth, is a partner in the family business The

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LEFT: Potato Hopper, from £22.95, The Cotswold Company
CENTRE: Thomas & Thomas Piece Six larder