

CONTEMPORARY STYLE KITCHEN UNITS

Modern kitchens can work well in both new and old homes and needn't necessarily be white and glossy. Indeed, as **Natasha Brinsmead** explains, they are the perfect solution for most situations

Total White Out

The Bulthaup b1 kitchen is made from solid core laminate which allows for seamless, pared down designs (bulthaup.com)

*Unit fronts really
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Contemporary-style kitchens are definitely on the rise, despite the nation's love of the classic country look — and there is good reason too. Modern kitchens work well. They make sense with their clean, space-maximising lines and seamless, dirt-repelling worktops. They are dominated by practical, wipe-clean materials, which also look great, and really make the most of nifty storage systems.

YOUR STYLE CHOICES

Contemporary-style kitchens are full of contradictions and there are far more options available to buyers than just white, glossy and straight when it comes to choosing units. The assumption used to be that contemporary kitchens were all streamlined and minimalist — and of course some of the best are — but there is a strong trend at present for curves, too.

The most popular finishes for contemporary kitchens appear to be at complete opposites to one another too — high gloss or totally matt. And don't think that you should be confined to just stark white or neutral tones either — timber units with a gloss finish look really striking and add a feeling of warmth.

The key thing, whether opting for straight lines or softer curves, pure white or a rainbow finish, is that units and worktops should be fuss-free. So, no overly decorative handles, plinths should be hidden from view, and unit fronts in this style of kitchen really look their best when kept totally simple. In fact it is quite hard to find contemporary units that actually have handles. Some are totally handle-less, operating on push-click systems, whilst others have subtle grooves integrated into the door for opening.

WHERE TO BUY

Whilst most kitchen specialists and DIY warehouses have contemporary ranges, there are a few who do it really well and are worth checking out. Second Nature have a big range of modern kitchens in a huge range of colours, materials and finishes. Their Remo kitchen is great if you like the idea of curves, whilst the Fresco Beige offers a nice matt finish in neutral tones. Neil Lerner too

High Shine (above)

Parapan's (01482 440680) high-gloss solid acrylic in Anthracite Grey has here been used on a kitchen by Roundhouse (020 7297 6220). It is seen teamed with Zodiac Cloud White Corian surfaces

Right: Rational's Tio kitchen (0114 255 8008)



Killer Curves

This curvaceous kitchen was created using Parapan. The light/dark contrast works brilliantly (01482 440680)





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KEY DESIGN TIPS

- Don't feel that you should be limited to just one material/colour/finish in your kitchen. Although the finished look should be one of relative simplicity in terms of details, mixing and matching textures, colours and materials works well and adds interest.

- Keep flooring neutral. Large-format stone tiles, in slate and limestone, look great, as do some of the new designs in linoleum and resin-based floorings, such as those from Amtico (amtico.com). Polished concrete is also perfect for contemporary kitchens.



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Crisp Lines

1 & 3. The Linear range of kitchens from Harvey Jones (0800 389 7365) comes primed, ready for painting. Prices start from £17,000; 2. This Neil Lerner kitchen (neillerner.com) features high-gloss acrylic Steel Blue units from their handle-less range. For contrast it has been teamed with Tobacco oak veneer and CaesarStone Blizzard worktops

Contemporary Kitchens



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All Shapes and Sizes

4. Offering brilliant storage solutions, kitchens from Ikea are perfect for those on a budget (ikea.com); 5. The Metris Crescent Curve kitchen (metriskitchens.co.uk) features matt Zebrano and matt sand worktops by Consentino; 6. The Jette kitchen from Wilson Fink (wilsonfink.co.uk) has a starting price of £20,000; 7. This kitchen was designed by Holloways of Ludlow (020 8487 9422) and features walnut veneer units and composite worktops

offers a brilliant contemporary range and Ikea and Wickes both have good ranges for those wanting to stick to a tighter budget — Wickes' Costa Rica kitchen from their 'take away' range starts at just £749.

DOING CONTEMPORARY ON A BUDGET

It is relatively easy to achieve a stylish contemporary kitchen if you have tens of thousands of pounds to throw at it, but if you have more limited funds you may have to be a bit more creative. Contemporary kitchens do, however, benefit from things being kept simple and it is in fact often easier to achieve a stylish contemporary kitchen on a budget than it is a traditional one — as you save on details such as fancy handles and plinths and can get away with choosing the very simplest of unit fronts, so long as you get the worktops and lighting spot on.

Choose basic, inexpensive unit carcasses (use existing ones if you have them and they are in good state condition). Flat-pack base unit carcasses can be bought for around £40 — try Screwfix and Land & Larks.

Plenty of suppliers offer ranges suitable for those on a budget too (see *Where to Buy*). If you are renovating and have a tired kitchen on your hands, you might want to consider giving it a makeover rather than ripping it out and starting again. There are companies out there specialising in kitchen refurbishment (try Spraycraft) who will give your existing kitchen a new finish through a paint spraying service.

TO TOP IT ALL OFF

There are several worktop materials which suit contemporary kitchens well. Composites, such as Corian, Silestone and DuPont Zodiaq all look stunning. They are made from a combination of real stone (often quartz for its resistance to acids and extreme hardness) and binding polymers, along with pigments. They come in any colour and finish you could wish for, including those that sparkle and matt tones that resemble polished concrete. They are also stain, scratch and water resistant. The only downside to composites is that they tend to weigh heavy on the purse strings, costing from £300/m. ▶

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Mixing and Matching

1. The Imola made-to-order kitchen from Wickes (wickes.co.uk); 2. Combining timber and high-gloss finishes, this kitchen is from Wilson Fink (wilsonfink.co.uk)



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Brights and Whites

3. This Neil Lerner kitchen (020 7433 0705) features an island made from a single piece of Corian, wrapped around antique white satin lacquered units; 4. The Ibsen kitchen, from Wren Kitchens, features Zeno drawers (wrenkitchens.com)



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Although laminates might not immediately spring to mind when designing a new contemporary-style kitchen, they have really come on in the last few years and there are several which do the job of mimicking stone, wood and even composites really well, including the Omega range from Bushboard. Prices for laminates start at £25/m, but those at the lower end of the price scale will not have the looks, nor the practical qualities to do most contemporary kitchens justice.

Although stone and timber are often thought of as the reserve of more traditional kitchens, choose well and they can be ideal for modern styles too. Avoid patterned or sparkly finishes on stones such as granite (from £150/m) and opt instead for pure colours. Sandstone is an unusual but really eye-catching choice, as is slate. However, both are prone to acid stains and scratching if not finished and sealed properly.

Timbers such as walnut, teak and oak can add warmth to contemporary kitchens as well as setting white and neutral units off well. Oak worktops cost from £80/m.

LIGHT IT RIGHT

Never underestimate the role that good lighting plays in creating a fabulous contemporary kitchen. Use your scheme to highlight the design of the room. Low-voltage halogen lighting or LEDs under the front edge of wall or base units will throw out a glow over your floor or worktop. Have a look at the range from Kitchen Stori (kitchenstori.com), which includes plinth lights, LED shelves, under-cabinet lights and a striking back light wall panel. Alternatively get your skilled electrician/lighting designer to co-ordinate with the kitchen company. Oversized pendants in copper, bronze or brushed stainless steel look brilliant hung over a breakfast bar. ■

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