



THE KITCHEN DISAPPEARS

There is an increasing trend to make them invisible says **Anna Agapova**



Ever since the guideline of ergonomic space was presented by Ernst Neufert, kitchen design has become much less about its prevalent surroundings and more about the user. Contrary to the days of slaving over a hot stove, owners now aspire to convivial chat with their guests with incidental food preparation in a multi-functional open-space environment. Kitchens have become lounges; causing interior designers and kitchen manufacturers to rethink the galley clichés of yesteryear. At the forefront of this is the 'invisible kitchen space' concept. Kitchens? Need they really be kitchens all day?

These days designers hide them well; behind textured panels or inside cabinets, leaving little evidence of neither a workspace nor a single utensil in sight. Kitchen cabinets have been the key to this as their doors can be simply merged into the walls to reveal the beauty of the living space.

Kitchen manufacturers took this idea and ran with it. At the touch of a button, an entire kitchen disappears from view like a submarine, taps submerge below the counter and hoods are fixed in the ceiling. 'Invisible kitchens' imitate the ingenious complexity of expensive cars – reassuring quality, flawless utility, and alluring comfort. A kitchen that slots effortlessly into an open-space layout provides multitudes of creative opportunity for designers. Open-space designs fail most often when the space becomes grid-locked, however 'invisible kitchens' help designers introduce space and style-balance to the room.

When incorporating 'invisible kitchens' into open-space areas, functional zoning comes into play – the cooking area needs distinguishing from the dining space. The island is the usual home for the hob or sinks and can make a great

location for a breakfast bar. If the dining and living spaces aren't combined, then keep the dining space near the cooking area.

Porous materials, including marble and limestone, aren't recommended for kitchens. They absorb moisture, causing stains that even specialised cleaning fluids can't remove. Close attention should be given to the arrangement of electrical equipment within composite cabinets. In traditional kitchens, ovens have been placed under the hob. In the modern day kitchen, it's better placed just above work-surface level – easing your 18-lb duck's oven exit, along with its lava-hot cooking juices.

There are several technical solutions to positioning extractor hoods properly. If the oven is within the island, you can mount a ceiling hood using glass, metal - or even hang dishes on the mounting. 'Invisible kitchen' concepts favour hoods that emerge from a worktop. For ovens in the main kitchen area, the hood can be placed in the upper cabinet area. Powerful modern extractor hoods can be ceiling-mounted where they go unseen.

The Invisible Kitchen concept is gaining fans. It offers a fully modern kitchen, complete with functionality and ease of use – while giving designers free creative rein to devise open-space areas. It may sound like Thunderbirds - but in reality, it all pops into place at the touch of a button.

For a kitchen with long-term technical reliability aligned to livability, it's best to call in a professional kitchen designer – who has the latest developments in kitchen technology at their fingertips, to turn your dream kitchen into workable reality.

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