

Alison Pay wanted to create a cool kitchen to fit her family's lifestyle. With help from designer Darren Lamb, the new layout has not one, but two, statement islands

Words: Yvette Murrell Photography: Paul Craig

Dynamic DUO

Having lived in the same home for over seven years with her husband and three children, marketing director Alison Pay could see her family was outgrowing its existing set up. The five-bedroom detached house in Oxted, East Surrey was built in the 1980s, but its style felt outdated and its layout was restrictive. Over the years, the Pays had gradually redecorated each room of the house to give it a more contemporary feel, until they were left with the biggest room to tackle – the kitchen. "We'd been in the house for quite some time," Alison says. "The children had grown and our family evolved, and I wanted us to have a space where we could all be together but not be on top of each other."

Originally, the area was formed of two rooms: a smaller kitchen, which led through to the conservatory, and an unused dining room. Alison decided to knock down the wall between the two spaces and brought the original dining room wall back in line with the existing kitchen wall. "My previous kitchen, whilst still a reasonable size, lacked working space which I found ▶





This open-plan space has been divided into different zones: places for cooking, dining, socialising, and working.

frustrating with such a busy household," she explains. "I love to cook and entertain, so an island dedicated to cooking was top of my list, as well as a sociable space to sit that wasn't as formal as the dining table. That's how I came up with the idea of two islands."

Alison spent time researching ideas and visited the Grand Designs Live exhibition for inspiration. "It's actually where I first saw the fridge-freezer we now have," she recalls. "I also spoke to my brother, a chef, who gave me good practical advice on what to consider when planning the new kitchen layout – like making sure the hob was not too far away from the sink." Once she had her ideas together, Alison approached several kitchen companies, but felt the design processes were not as interactive as she had hoped for. That was until she came across Darren Lamb from Hehku Heavenly Spaces. "Darren took on board all my thoughts, ideas, and concerns and was able to produce a design that was perfect for my family," Alison remembers. "He came and looked at the space and was able to understand how the

kitchen needed to flow with the rest of the house. It had already been brought up to a modern style, and I wanted to kitchen to fit in with that."

Alison was keen to have a contemporary kitchen with German appliances, as she knew from her research that they tended to be high spec. Darren then came up with the idea of oval-shaped islands – an unusual choice for German-style kitchens – to create a unique feel and soften the overall look of an otherwise boxy space. "Darren was really helpful when it came to refining my ideas. I knew I wanted a soft grey colour palette, although I didn't quite know what kind of combination," Alison says. "He advised on what different colours and textures should be used to help break up such a large space, and provided me with samples so I could see them in the kitchen. Worktop space was most important, so we chose this first. It was very much a collaborative process, which I really enjoyed."

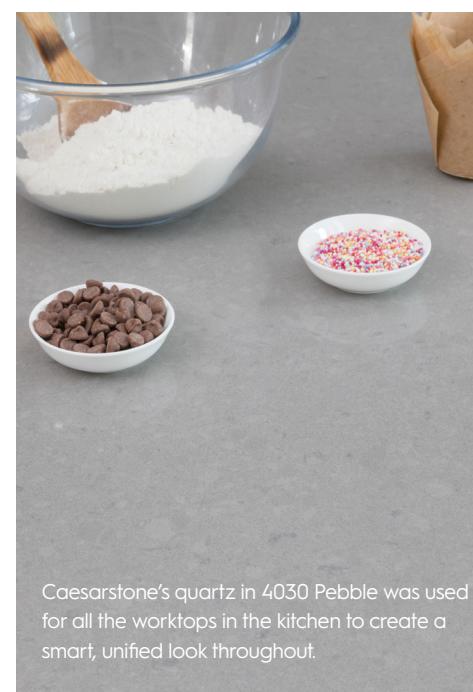
Good storage was also a must-have in the Pay household. "I absolutely wanted to maximise storage – you can never have enough!" Alison

laughs. "I also didn't want the cupboards to be too cluttered. It's very functional now. Stored near the ovens are the pots and pans, cutlery and crockery can be found in the cooking island cabinets, and everything you need for breakfast and drinks is by the coffee machine area. As for the white reduced-depth storage along the back wall, we keep non-kitchen items here – the kids' arts and crafts materials, the printer, and our laptops. The worktop there is ideal for popping down phones and keys – I think it is really important for everything to have a place."

Despite having a north-facing garden, lots of light floods throughout the space – especially now, thanks to the new layout. "The door by the cooking island opens up to the hallway and is part-glazed, so I can see right through to the front door – great for keeping track of who is coming and going," says Alison, who is thrilled with the finished result. "Having this much open space works so well for our family now. We all love being in here and it's allowed us to have much more quality time together." ▶



↑ Reduced-depth cabinetry at the back of the room houses non-kitchen items such as the children's craft supplies and Alison's office equipment. The open display on the upper units creates an aesthetically interesting element.



Caesarstone's quartz in 4030 Pebble was used for all the worktops in the kitchen to create a smart, unified look throughout.

Q&A

Darren Lamb, designer at Hehku Heavenly Spaces, says...

What did you enjoy most about this project?

The challenge of designing two large islands; you don't get the opportunity to do that in most kitchens, due to the space available. It was also really enjoyable to be able to design a kitchen using a mix of handleless and handled cabinetry, as well as curved and linear units.

Any major U-turns during the project?

Not a U-turn as such, but we did have to quickly overcome an issue when fitting the fridge-freezer. It's an American-style model Alison had seen when visiting Grand Designs Live, and was one of the first to be installed in the UK. But when it arrived, the measurements weren't as we had anticipated. We didn't want anything to jeopardise the finished look of the kitchen, so during installation we built a custom stainless steel plinth onsite so the fridge-freezer would sit flush within the bank of cabinetry. Luckily, it looks great!

What element took up the majority of the budget?

Thanks to the amount of storage and bespoke pieces, the cabinetry took up about half of the budget. I think it totally pays off though – the kitchen really does have the wow factor.

Any advice for other homeowners embarking on a similar project?

Really think about how you want to use your kitchen. These days it's not just about building a space to cook in, it's creating a whole new lifestyle. The Pays' family life has changed because of how this space works for them now.



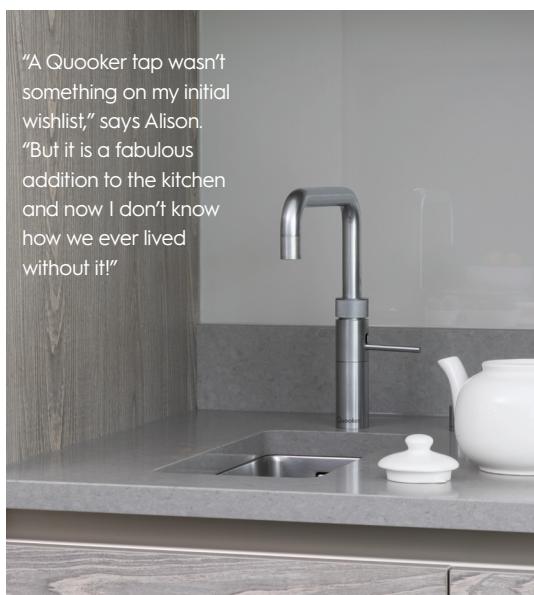
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"My advice to other homeowners looking to do something similar? Just take your time, look everywhere for ideas, and visit a few different kitchen companies before you begin. Don't be pushed into decisions you're not 100% comfortable with. The process takes a lot of time and money – but if done right, you'll come out of it with something you absolutely love."

Alison Pay, homeowner



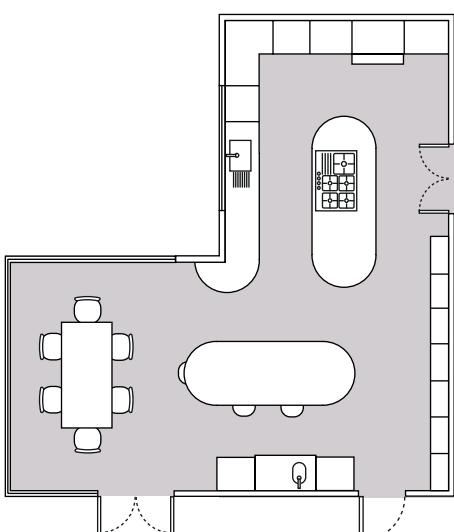
"A Quooker tap wasn't something on my initial wishlist," says Alison. "But it is a fabulous addition to the kitchen and now I don't know how we ever lived without it!"



As the extractor fan has a distinctly linear design, Darren came up with the idea of designing a curved surround precisely mirroring the island below.

THE PLANS

The wall dividing the previous dining room and kitchen was knocked through to create a large open-plan space.



SOURCE Book

DESIGN

Kitchen designer Darren Lamb, Hehku Heavenly Spaces (0800 542 4197 or hehku.co.uk)

KITCHEN

Cabinetry Störmer (stoermer-kuechen.de), available from Hehku Heavenly Spaces, as before
Worktops Caesarstone (0800 158 8088 or caesarstone.co.uk)

Appliances Hob, microwave, coffee machine, fridge-freezer, integrated under-counter fridge, dishwasher, all Siemens (0344 892 8999 or siemens-home.co.uk); Built-in ovens, Neff (0344 892 8989 or neff.co.uk); Wine storage unit, Fisher & Paykel (0800 088 6605 or fisherpaykel.com); Ceiling extractor, Gutmann (gutmann-exklusiv.de/en), available from Hehku Heavenly Spaces, as before

Windows Nuglaze (01342 410535 or nuglaze.co.uk)

Flooring Barge Tiles (01342 775331 or bargetiles.co.uk)

Sinks Blanco (01923 635200 or blanco.co.uk)

Taps Mixer tap, Blanco, as before; Boiling-water tap, Quooker (0345 833 3555 or quooker.co.uk)

Splashback Bespoke Glass (0800 804 8218 or bespokeglassdesign.co.uk)

Barstools Leather stools, BoConcept (boconcept.co.uk); Wooden stools, Ercol (01844 271800 or ercol.com)

Dining table and chairs BoConcept, as before

Pendant light For similar try, Heal's (0333 212 1915 or heals.com)

COST

A similar kitchen would cost around £60,000

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