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INDIA

SAVVY KITCHENS

SMART KITCHENS ARE GETTING SMARTER WITH INNOVATIVE DESIGNS AND REVOLUTIONARY PRACTICES.

DOORS & WINDOWS

AN OPEN AND SHUT CASE

Here's a closer look at the play of materials and finish in the designing of doors and windows.



HOME IS WHERE THE HEARTH IS!

Smart kitchens are getting smarter with innovative designs and revolutionary practices.



PHOTO COURTESY: KUNAL BHATIA FOR L'OC DESIGN



Muted colours, a backsplash, two chimneys and an L-shaped counter in this swish kitchen.

Big or small, contemporary or conventional, the kitchen is the epicentre of every Indian home. Indeed, every time friends and family come together, it is the kitchen that takes centre-stage. It works as the heart of the home, bringing people closer and helping them share love and warmth over a meal. In fact, no other room in a house, apart from the bathroom, serves such a distinct purpose. Thus, it is vitally important to have an efficient modern kitchen that serves as a hub for the home.

We speak to top architects and designers to understand how Indian kitchens are being designed to ensure optimum functionality.

THE STRUCTURE

How do architects and designers ensure that cooking is a pleasurable activity and not just a chore? **Eisha Nagpal, co-founder and architect, Engaging Spaces**, says it is very important to understand the requirements of homeowners, such as ascertaining whether they eat together every day and whether they cook together. For a family that cooks together, a kitchen should be open and assist in easy flow of conversations from connecting rooms. “The kitchen should not feel disconnected and be ventilated, both naturally and artificially,” she says.

Yatin Kavaiya, co-founder, Usine Studio, prefers open kitchens because “such a layout allows one to interact more with guests and family members”. Innovative designs such as kitchen islands or breakfast counters not only provide storage but serve as dining tops.

With an increasing number of homeowners choosing simple yet efficient layouts for their kitchens, minimalist design aesthetics are the order of the day. **Jeet Datta, principal architect, CHAR**, tells us how, in a recent home project, his team used integrated handles for an uncluttered streamlined look to achieve seamless access and safer utilisation of the space. “We also incorporated open shelving, which is convenient and provides easy access,” he says.

To elevate the experience of cooking, CHAR used a neat



Ease of use is the true measure of an efficient kitchen.



Pretty lamps and artefacts in a open kitchen.



Kitchen islands provide storage and can be used as counter and dining tops.

PHOTO COURTESY: THE ORANGE LANE, USINE STUDIO, KUNAL BHATIA FOR SANKRAMAN DESIGN STUDIO



Storage should be housed in such a way that the items or appliances are handy and in proximity of the work space.

material palette, handmade ceramic tiles and a pop of colour for the kitchen. “Sometimes space can be a constraint and we have to work around that,” he adds. “Our space-optimising strategy includes breaking down the solid kitchen wall into a utility wall, which has ample storage space.”

SPACE OPTIMISATION

In cities such as Mumbai, space is truly a huge constraint and architects have to carve out fresh ideas for kitchen designs. While small kitchens are more efficient, when hosting large groups of people, big kitchens have a lot more to offer. And while small kitchens are less cluttered, bigger ones can easily be renovated later.

According to **Sapna Lakhe, principal architect, Sankraman Design Studio**, small kitchens provide the opportunity to design multifunctional and flexible products that save space and money. “Small kitchens can aesthetically

be a part of the rest of the living space with the use of bright colours, materials and textures,” she says. “It’s best to use monochrome colours for bigger kitchens.”

Big kitchens, however, are more open to different kinds of elements such as open shelves or spaces for artefacts, planters and appliances. That said, if not planned properly, these kitchens can have under or unutilised spaces and may even become difficult to maintain.

EXPERT ADVICE

When planning or redesigning a kitchen, professionals begin with the overall layout while homeowners often start with the colour palette and appliance space. Though an owner can design his or her kitchen efficiently, professional design ensures maximum comfort, mobility and multifunctionality with minimum wastage of space.

Listing his three top tips, **Hrishikesh More, principal**



Natural ventilation is the best.

architect, Bhumi Design, says: Use neutrals and light colours for a peaceful ambiance and to make the space appear bigger. Use modular storage and modular kitchen accessories for a well-organised kitchen. And keep the area bright and airy by incorporating large windows and ensuring existing windows are not covered

Yatin Kavaiya feels utilisation of every bit of available space is the key to building an effective kitchen. Storage should be housed in such a way that the items or appliances are handy and in proximity of the workspace.

L-shaped counters and tall storages are quite popular for small kitchens as they optimise space management. One can also use the space above refrigerators for storage. According to Sapna Lakhe, island tables work better in bigger kitchens. "Island tables in bright colours create a bright, contrasting space when placed against kitchen cabinets," she says.

"Why not convert the walls into usable units, especially for smaller kitchens," Jeet Datta adds. Organised storage, with due consideration given to easy access, maximises comfort and area of cooking.

For **Shabnam Gupta, principal designer, The Orange Lane,** good kitchen design is all about the right 'shelves', 'colours' and 'layers'. If the idea is to save space, adding layers and levels can work wonders as can open shelves.

MISTAKES TO AVOID

If well-planned, the kitchen can turn into your favourite room and cooking can be a pleasure. But never forget that it is the only space in your house that uses electricity, gas, fire and sharp objects, all at the same time. Thus, kitchens have to be designed right.

Indian cooking generates fumes and residues that tend to settle on walls and storage units. A kitchen without a



Have fun with colours and tiles to inspire innovative cooking.



Open kitchens encourage conversations.

chimney and backsplash and with materials that are not easy to clean and maintain can be a nightmare. Designers often forget to understand the lifestyle and space usage of the user before designing, as it is often easy to fall into an aesthetic trap that sidelines functionality and efficiency. This lack of customisation can make it a challenge for a person to use and maintain any space in the long run.

Modern designs must complement wet and dry garbage disposal systems and follow the golden triangle principle applicable to movement between the hob, sink and fridge. Other mistakes to look out for, according to experts, are unutilised spaces above the fridge and under the sink, and poor lighting and inadequate counter space.

So, get smart when it comes to your kitchen—use good design to preserve its warmth while updating its look, feel and function. ■

Text: Debarati Chakraborty

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