

Kitchen confident

A busy London couple has transformed their outdated, poorly designed kitchen and dining room into practical but vibrant spaces where bold colour choices are only part of the story



Words and styling: Sally Smith Photography: Malcolm Menzies

The **wall paint**, Farrow & Ball's All White, complements the **tiles**, from Topps Tiles, for a clean finish. The worktop and main kitchen cabinets are made from American Walnut in a 4cm-thick traditional plank style. The cabinetry uses a frameless carcass with a Shaker-style door and durable oak veneered ply interior. **Oven**, Samsung; **hob**, Bosch.

Although this kitchen, located in a first-floor maisonette, is very limited on space, owners Mark McKay and Daniel Robinson didn't compromise on having a bold look when the time came to renovate. "I'm an interior designer for Paul Smith and the best part of my job is that I can make a lasting impact on any room with my own unique style. So, as you can imagine, I couldn't wait to do it for myself," laughs Mark. The couple moved from a flat they rented in Fitzrovia to their Brixton property four years ago. "It was a big year for us. I turned 30, we got married, and we bought our first house together," he recalls. They had spent a lot of time socialising with friends in the area and it felt like their second home. "It's only a ten minute walk to Brixton Village – it was just becoming trendy, so it felt like an exciting place to be." Mark and Daniel, a television producer for Good Morning Britain, wanted a period property with character features. "We wouldn't have been happy with a modern new-build house. So when we saw this, we knew it was right for us," Mark explains. "It had been advertised as a two-bedroom flat, but as there is just the two of us – and Oscar the cat – we didn't need a spare room. So we agreed that the entire ground floor should be the living space, with our bedroom and bathroom upstairs in the converted loft."

The plan was to revamp the bathroom first – but after only two weeks of living with the existing kitchen, the couple's plans changed. "The layout was driving us mad. There was nowhere to sit and eat – it was so impractical," he explains. "It was made from cheap off-the-shelf cupboards that didn't fit the space properly. The wall cabinets were so low you couldn't even fit a two-litre bottle on the work surface. They also made the space feel really boxed in and dark."

The main aim of the revamp was to remove the majority of the wall units and open the space up to make it feel wider. To do this, Mark and Daniel converted the former second bedroom into a formal dining space before tackling the kitchen. Mark had a clear image of how he wanted the space to function and look. "I've always liked to mix the traditional with a more edgy industrial look and I love the juxtaposition of blending the old with the new," he says. "Our surroundings really helped, as the kitchen's existing exposed brickwork works so well against the backdrop of the railway line you can see through the window."



Daniel and Mark wanted a practical layout, with a visually striking kitchen that had an industrial feel. **Installation and design**, Natalie McHugh and Kelly Willmott, of NK Living; **cabinetry and worktops**, Naked Kitchens; **bespoke table and storage bench**, Windmill Furniture; **Pendant lights**, Nud.

The couple discovered Naked Kitchens and designers Natalie McHugh and Kelly Willmott, of NK Living, through Daniel's sister-in-law, who used them for her own kitchen design. "I'm quite nosy and noticed the quality of the oak carcasses straight away," laughs Mark. "I knew I wanted something very specific, and I'm quite fussy about finishes, so the idea that all cabinetry was handmade really appealed to me." On board from the start, Natalie and Kelly project managed, arranged the removal of the old kitchen, and had the room re-plastered, decorated, and installed the cabinetry.

Due to the limited space, the layout is similar to the old kitchen but with fewer wall cabinets. The plumbing wasn't changed either, so the appliances remain in the original positions. However, using frameless carcasses gave them a few extra vital millimetres to play with. Mark and Daniel also knew they had to incorporate more room to keep things, as they had taken out most of the original eye-level cupboards. The solution was to add a storage bench as part of the seating area around a new bespoke dining table. The couple then chose all new appliances to fit in with the kitchen's design and colour.

For the décor, Mark was constantly looking at different interiors for inspiration. The idea of the split flooring in the kitchen, for example, came to him in a pub. "I noticed they had black and white tiles edging the bar. It was a light-bulb moment. I knew this would work around the kitchen cabinets and make a stunning contrast to oak flooring where the table is. As soon as we put it in, the room felt so much bigger, which was an added bonus," he says. The cabinets were originally going to be black, but Mark changed his mind at the last minute. "It's a north-facing room, so it could've made it look rather cold. In the end, I chose a dark teal that adds the warmth and edge I was looking for. I like being surrounded by intense hues – that's why the colour carries into the dining room, to match the kitchen and make the two spaces flow. It's a favourite of mine – I love the vibrancy," he adds. "We use the kitchen all the time now. It doubles up as a workspace, as well as a general hang out zone. We love to entertain and host lots of dinner parties. Who says you can't have a kitchen and formal dining room in a one-bedroom maisonette in Brixton?" ►



The couple cleverly added a wine rack above the door to maximise every pocket of space. **Floor tiles and oak flooring**, Havwoods.



THE FACTS

Who? Mark McKay and Daniel Robinson with Oscar the cat
What? Kitchen renovation of a one-bedroom maisonette
Where? Brixton
Cost? A similar kitchen would cost from £10,000
Time? Around seven months

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← Mark had the **table and storage bench**, by Windmill Furniture, made to be the same height as the worktops. The table is on casters, so it can double up as a preparation area, and can comfortably sit four. "We used walnut for the worktops and table, which looks like a giant chopping block and is cut from the same piece of walnut – but from the end grain. The legs are actually off-the-shelf newel posts, sprayed to match the units." **Stools**, Industville.

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→ To match the kitchen cabinets, the dining room was **painted** in Dulux Trade Celestial Cloud 1, so the two spaces connect. **Light**, M&S. **Table and chairs**, for similar, try Heal's; **mirror**, for similar, try John Lewis & Partners. ▶





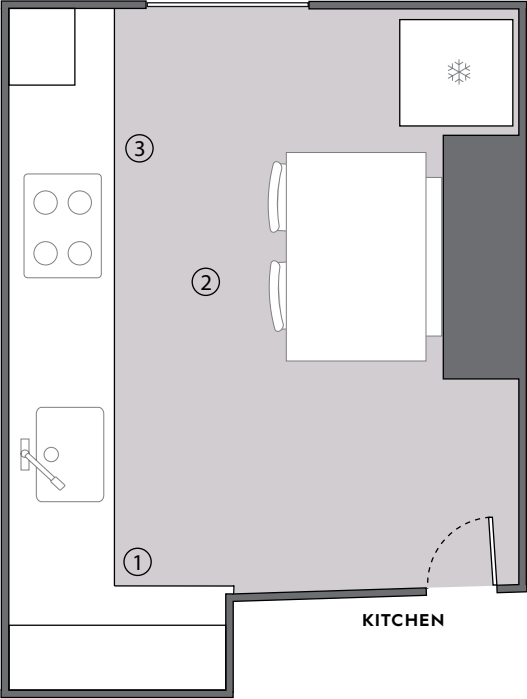
↑ “We knew we were coming with a lot of stuff when we moved in, so we replaced all the floating shelving with built-in cabinetry in the dining room to give us plenty of storage,” Mark explains.

→ Mark is a talented artist – he draws pencil portraits of pets in his spare time – and the dramatic teal-painted dining room is the perfect spot to do so.



THE PLANS

The formerly dark, ill-fitting kitchen was replaced with a brighter scheme. Due to the compact space, the new design also has an L-shape and all appliances remained in their original spot.



1 L-shape To make best use of what was available, the new scheme was designed in the same layout as the old one.
2 Worktop and table Made from the same piece of walnut, the seating area was cut from the end grain. It has space to sit four but can also be rolled around on casters and used as mobile preparation area.
3 Cabinetry As the space is quite compact, Mark and Daniel decided against eye-level cupboards in order to prevent the kitchen looking too dark.

SOURCE BOOK

Installation and design NK Living 07969 500058
Cabinetry and worktops Naked Kitchens 01328 838854, nakedkitchens.com
Joinery Windmill Furniture 01895 634175, windmillfurniture.com
Oven and fridge-freezer Samsung 0330 726 7864, samsung.com/uk
Hob Bosch 0344 892 8979, bosch-home.co.uk
Cooker hood Stoves 0344 815 3740, stoves.co.uk
Belfast sink Perrin and Rowe 01708 526361, perrinandrowe.co.uk
Taps Tap Warehouse 01202 556655, tapwarehouse.com
For full stockist information, see page 154 **KBB**

HOME STYLE



1 Gubi G-10 pendant in black, £333, Rume. rume.co.uk **2** Broste Copenhagen Sire stool in natural wood and iron, £123, Amara. amara.com **3** Harlequin large ceramic tile in black, £79.97 for a set of four, Original Style. originalstyle.com **4** Task short wall light in black, £199, Original BTC. uk.originalbtc.com **5** Rustic terracotta pots in a wire basket, £16.45 for a set of three, The Farthing. thefarthing.co.uk **6** Large round silver mirror on hanging rope, £36, Hurn & Hurn. hurnandhurn.com **7** Muted Bubinga wood-effect tiles, £49.95, Walls and Floors. wallsandfloors.co.uk **8** Argos Home five-piece full copper pan set, £175, Argos. argos.co.uk **9** Magni small leather handle, £13.99, Dowsing & Reynolds. dowsingandreynolds.com **10** Tiru matt emulsion, £38 for 2.5 litres, Graham & Brown. grahambrown.com **11** Rattan black birch bistro chair in black, £94.49, Maisons Du Monde. maisonsdumonde.com **12** BAK 710 white ceramic Belfast sink, £348, Franke. franke.com **13** KD90HNE extractor hood in Opera Black, £519, Smeg. smeguk.com