

# 'Clever design and planning were key to our new look'

Kelly Ohlmus and Darren Taylor have updated an existing extension to create a bright and airy kitchen-diner

WORDS SALLY SMITH PHOTOGRAPHS BRUCE HEMMING

## BEFORE



### ORIGINAL ROOM

Above The house had already been extended at the back, creating the layout of an L-shaped kitchen-diner, with a separate family room alongside it

### NATURAL FINISHES

Right Oak flooring from Wood & Beyond adds a warm feel, echoed in the work surfaces and seating. The Vicenza matt units are from Imaggio Interiors

## FACT FILE

### THE OWNERS

Kelly Ohlmus (above right), and her partner Darren Taylor, who run their own website design company (insideleft.co.uk), live here with their children Tomas, eight and Neasa, six

### THE PROPERTY

A four-bedroom terraced house, built around 1911

### THE LOCATION

Ealing, West London

### WHAT THEY SPENT

The couple's kitchen project cost around £55,000



We moved from Sydney, Australia to Chiswick in West London in 2007 and lived there for three years, but we knew we couldn't afford to buy a house in the area,' explains Kelly. 'We wanted to settle down in the UK and find somewhere that would suit us long-term.'

Kelly and partner Darren discovered the leafy borough of Ealing by accident and realised that it had everything they were looking for – it was family-friendly, with

good schools and great transport links – so they looked for a home in the area.

They were among the first to view this red-brick, bay-fronted terraced house in a quiet residential street. 'As soon as we walked in we decided to make an offer,' says Kelly. 'It was in the right price range, the layout inspired us, and we could see how to remodel the back of the house. We knew we could live there comfortably until we had the money to put our stamp on it.'

The previous owners had extended the back of the house three metres into the

garden and built a basic glass roof over the dining area, with a single skylight above the kitchen. 'We loved the idea of the glass roof to let the sunlight in but the layout didn't give us the open-plan family space we wanted. It looked dated and desperately needed reworking,' says Kelly.

Kelly and Darren were happy with the rest of the house as it already had a loft extension and, although it wasn't the best design, it didn't make sense to rebuild it. 'We've come up with clever ways to make the most of the space' explains Kelly.

'Over the last five years, since moving in, we have upgraded the bathroom and landscaped the front and back gardens, but I couldn't wait to redesign the kitchen.'

She had already been collecting ideas in a scrapbook. 'I knew I wanted an eclectic mix of modern and traditional styles, but I was struggling to visualise how it would all come together. I had to stick to a realistic budget but I just wasn't sure it would be possible,' she says.

Kelly asked local designer Liz Biagini for help. Liz transformed Kelly's ideas onto

paper and provided detailed layouts and plans. 'She was brilliant; I couldn't have done it without her,' says Kelly. 'I had dreamt of having a utility room since leaving Australia, but I didn't think we'd have the space. Liz came up with a solution.'

The original layout consisted of an L-shaped kitchen-diner with a separate family room. 'To make the most of the original extension and create the utility room, the existing cloakroom had to be made smaller and the original doorway from the hallway to the kitchen had to be ►



blocked off,' explains Kelly. We were keen not to change the structural elements too significantly, to keep down costs. We decided not to build onto the party walls and keep the drainage where it was.' To create an open-plan living area the supporting wall between the living room and kitchen had to be removed and a steel RSJ incorporated across the back of the house.

The building contractors, with project manager Vaidas Sabonis, came on board in January this year, a few months after the design was agreed. 'The builders were booked to start in October 2014, but, as Kelly recalls, 'I had a call a week before to say that my mum was seriously ill, and I had no choice but to go back to Australia to look after her.' Kelly stayed for six weeks, but thankfully her mum was given the all clear.

To help keep the project on track, Kelly wanted to be on site to deal with suppliers and any problems. 'We just couldn't afford to move out, although it was the middle of winter and freezing. We had to resort to using our camping gear while the back of

the house was open to the elements. The builders had put up a false wall to block off a kitchen area for us to use and we ate our breakfast in the hallway.'

Part-way through the project, it became clear that the ceiling in the family space next to the kitchen would have to be renovated. 'We'd thought we might be able to keep it, but inevitably the work had taken its toll and it was beyond repair. We discussed what to do with Vaidas and decided to replace the entire ceiling, but didn't want to lose the cornicing,' adds Kelly. In the end, it only

cost an extra £600 to replace both the cornicing and ceiling. 'It looks as though it has been there for years.'

There were no other issues with the renovation, but getting the measurements right for the double-glazed, panelled glass roof and floor-to-ceiling bi-fold doors was a worry for the couple. 'The framework had to be in place before we could confirm the measurements. I had a few sleepless nights,' says Kelly, 'but the build was fully glazed and sealed within three weeks.'

**'I'd dreamt of having a utility room but didn't think we'd have the space. Our designer Liz came up with a solution'**

**GLAZING**

**Above** A fully glazed monopitch roof with floor-to-ceiling bi-fold doors, all made to measure by Barn

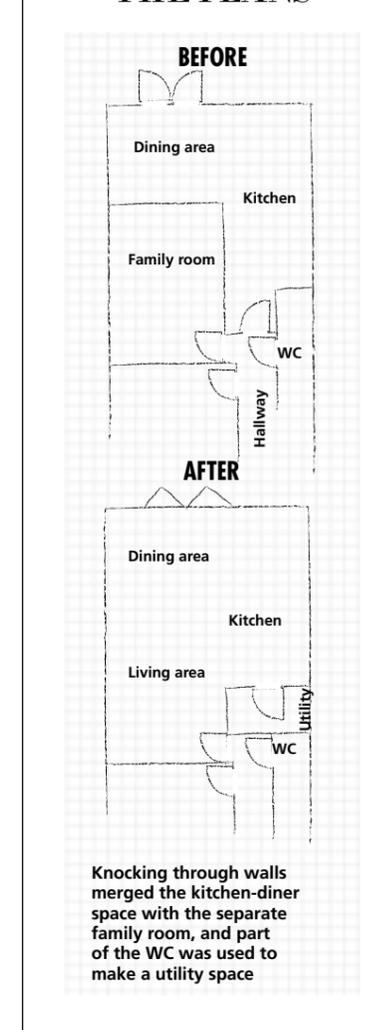
Glass, floods the room with sunlight and opens it up to the patio. For similar dining chairs (inside), try the Eames DSW design at Vitra

The new space was flooded with light from the glass roof, but as it was south-facing, glare could have been a problem. 'The kitchen design had to be carefully planned to avoid too much reflection and I knew gloss units wouldn't work,' says Kelly. Local kitchen company Imaggio Interiors recommended Italian matt-white units. A key part of the design is a three-metre-long oak island to give Kelly the work space she needed. 'It could have dominated the room, but the shelving on one side softens the look.'

Interior design agency Otta Designs gave extra advice. 'We were working with them and they agreed to help with the colour scheme and lighting,' says Kelly.

The project took three months, with only two weeks of down time waiting for the glass roof panels to be made. 'The results are fantastic. Our new kitchen has given us a practical open space for all the family to enjoy – for entertaining, working and playing – and even on the gloomiest of English days it's bright and comfortable. I wouldn't change a thing.' 🏠

**THE PLANS**



**THE CONTACTS**

**Kitchen design** Liz Biagini, 07958 996554  
**Construction** Ealing Home Improvements, 07772 059612, ealinghomeimprovements.co.uk  
**Kitchen** Imaggio Interiors, 0800 242 5440, imaggiointeriors.co.uk  
**Interior design** Otta Interior Design, 07525 726650, otta-design.com  
**Bi-fold doors and glass roof** Barn Glass  
**Appliances** Neff, Samsung

**THE COSTS**

Building works	<b>£30,000</b>
Glass roof and bi-fold doors	<b>£10,000</b>
Kitchen units	<b>£6,900</b>
Lighting, flooring and accessories	<b>£5,000</b>
Appliances	<b>£1,600</b>
Worktops	<b>£1,500</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£55,000</b>



**Project notes**

Kelly Ohlmus shares her ideas and tips for a successful redesign

**What I've learnt**

'Take your time to plan every detail of the project, before you have even found your builder. We were lucky that we were able to live in the house before the remodel started. It gave us plenty of time to understand how a new layout would work. There were no delays during the redesign as we knew the look we wanted (right).'

**My inspiration**

'I got all my ideas from Pinterest – an online pin board – I spent hours pinning my ideal interiors and stylish looks. It was a great way to collate my design ideas in a visual way by creating a mood board I could refer to throughout the project. It made it much easier for me to get the exact finish and look I wanted.' See [uk.pinterest.com/kohlms](http://uk.pinterest.com/kohlms).

**My top tip**

'Take advice from the specialists – interior designers and planners – it is certainly worth allowing for their costs in the budget. I knew I wanted the redesign to have the wow factor, but I thought it would be far too expensive. The professionals came up with the ideas to make it all possible; it was worth every penny.'

**My best buy**

'I love my American-style fridge-freezer (above right); I've never had so much space! I did a lot of research to get the best price, as all the kitchen companies said to source it myself. In the end I found that Samsung had the best reviews and bought the fridge-freezer online. It fits in perfectly with the rest of the kitchen.'

**My go-to shop**

'Industville has an excellent range of retro, vintage lighting, and it's such good value. I wanted to find industrial fittings to add an urban feel, but it was so expensive elsewhere. I went to the showroom and bought our pendant light (right) on the spot.' 🏠

