

Counter Culture

The synthesis of kitchen and living room continues into 2015, with designers and architects carving out cutting-edge kitchen spaces for socialising, working, entertaining and, yes, cooking and food prep. What's more, the latest technologies and tools of the trade take more of the work out of the culinary process, leaving more time for leisure. **TEXT: LISA VINCENTI**

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DESIGN FORMULA



From above, left: Joseph Joseph's *Edge* brushes make light work of cleanup; and Gessi's *100°* kitchen tap heats water to a boil.

and the working space of the kitchen island starts interacting with the living area."

Via the Armani/Dada *Bridge* series, architecture becomes a product, with wide, rich surfaces in dark oak framing new materials and details; while the *Checkers* kitchen was conceived for big spaces with large-scale kitchens in linear, corner or wall configurations. This work area of the home is interpreted by Armani using a formal, sober and essential design language that merely serves to highlight the elegance of the composition. In *Checkers*, showed off in a linear composition, natural woods, lacquers and textured back-painted glass are combined with the natural stone worktop. LED lighting is used at the bottom of the wall units and under the worktop for dramatic effect; and framed by the structure, the set-back wall units acquire a refined and minimal look.

For the fashion brand's new *Slide* range, Giorgio Armani was inspired by the informal yet refined atmosphere of a dinner invitation issued by a chef. It features a sophisticated marble worktop on a kitchen island, which slides open to reveal a thick stainless steel work area that includes a hob, sink and cutting board. The wall system includes wood panelling with oversized ceiling-height columns, and set-back wall units with horizontally sliding electric doors. Slide follows an approach adopted by some kitchen makers, who offer ranges to camouflage the kitchen's gadgets and appliances behind cabinetry.

"The focus nowadays is around the combination of functionality, high quality and luxurious finishes," says TTKK of Obegi Home, which works with European kitchen brands such as Bulthaup and Poliform Varenna. "We see a strong trend towards clean, reduced lines with impressive functional islands that transform the kitchen to the focal point of the home."

OUT IN THE OPEN

The desire for individualisation and customisation, and a craving for a more tailored approach, has influenced many kitchen cabinet players, some of whom are pushing a modular mix-and-match approach, like that available for the living room, to help home owners craft spaces that meet individual needs and lend a bespoke quality to the kitchen at a more reasonable price point.

Some recent introductions by kitchen makers offer a range of wall and cabinetry options to choose from, with an aesthetic quality that proves less intimidating, lighter and more flexible than what's been seen in the past few years.

This is the approach that prolific Spanish-born architect and designer Patricia Urquiola adopted when she turned her talents to the kitchen, creating her first for contemporary Italian brand Boffi's. Urquiola's eco-sustainable *Salinas* is a modular concept pairing non-traditional structures with more expected features, and including a broad swatch of materials and textures such as metal, copper, zinc and wood to choose from.

"*Salinas* is the beach of my childhood," comments Urquiola of the recently debuted line. "It is the memory of the kitchen in my grandfather's house, with views of the beach and the emotions associated with those moments."

Modules in the *Salinas* collection, which features a tubular metal structure, include table surfaces with built-in storage and metal shelves with integrated LED lighting systems, balanced with a large stone sink and solid wood surfaces that can be adjusted to create fixed table tops or sliding bar tops. Colours and textures can be swapped and combined for the desired effect. Like *Salinas*,



From above: Poggenpohl's new *Porsche* kitchen takes an open approach in White; Andree Jardin's minimalist *Canot* vegetable brushes are made for daily use.



which places some units on legs, comes the new *Fjord* collection from Italian maker Doimo Cucine also perches cabinetry on legs for a lighter, airier look. *Fjord* includes a number of wall-hung open shelving units and closed boxes for an expressive approach to storing and displaying, a look much more common in the living area but now appearing in the kitchen.

"When we design we want a sense of things being loose, [and of] people not feeling too cramped in," Grey says. "People are inclined to feel claustrophobic in small spaces, so the trick is to create the illusion of space. For example, not having all high-level cabinets stacked along the walls; to leave some space between the cabinets or the top of the cabinetry. Or, perhaps, not building the cabinetry all the way up into the corners, and using the ceiling to relieve the eye.

"Equally important, is organising the storage: you can basically get rid of a lot of stuff by using a large pantry, or even a small pantry, that takes the pressure off the cabinetry for storage purposes," he adds.

Scavolini's new *Ki* bath and kitchen collection, designed by Tokyo practice Nendo, pairs storage vessels and shelving. The series possesses a lux subtlety, despite its minimalist design. *Ki*, which means container or bowl (and also wood) in Japanese, is an adaptable design of modular white containers that rest on linear wood shelves. What's more, the vessels can also serve as sink bowls or stovetops. "These collections show that everything is getting very close. It doesn't make sense to put a name on a room," says Oki Sato, Nendo

principal and founder, explaining the blurred boundaries between various areas in the home.

Likewise French designer Ora-ïto's *Foodshelf* kitchen system for Scavolini, which takes an out-in-the-open approach. *Foodshelf* reworks the relationship between kitchen and living room, with the living area entering the kitchen space — or is it the kitchen moving into the living room? The system is composed mainly of low wall units, abandoning the more typical (and sometimes imposing) vertical approach, in favour of a horizontal one. Ora-ïto created a kitchen meant to serve as the hub of the home, and one that also offers an aesthetic continuity between living room and kitchen by adopting a new set of compositional parameters. Scavolini showcased the kitchen in an I-shaped configuration that reaches into the living room. The shelving unit, which includes open and closed components, stretches well into the living space to house books, art and entertainment gear.

"Shelves remove all the fussing about how you are not supposed to see anything and should hide it all behind closed doors," Grey says. "Obviously you put the hideous things behind doors, but don't forget to leave the nice things out. It is a kitchen, after all; it is a place for food and the vessels that store food. Why not display them?

"To a certain extent people seem to be ashamed of the objects in the kitchen and keep wanting to hide everything in drawers or cabinetry."

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White marble trays by Marie Michielssen for Serax