



Open & broken plan kitchens

From wide, expansive spaces to large rooms with private nooks and crannies – which style fits your family?

Words: Georgina Townshend

Open-plan living may not be new, but it's as popular as ever – yet there has been a shift in how we design our kitchens to truly fit how we use them every day. Coined broken plan, this includes more structural measures, from dropping floor levels to installing steel-framed glazing for a spacious appearance while also creating more defined areas. Both layouts have different feels, but they allow friends and family to be in the same space as you while cooking, eating, working, relaxing, and entertaining. Open plan often looks sleek and has a sense of continuity, while broken plan has more distinct zones that, ideally, still flow well. But where to start and how do you know which design is right for you? “Think about your needs and lifestyle,” says Jon Stanley, vice president of marketing at Caesarstone UK. “What does and doesn't work in the existing kitchen? Would it benefit from an extension or a reconfigured layout? Is it used mainly for quick meals or do you want to sit and relax with the family after dinner? By considering all these practical elements during the planning stage, the next step is to think about the overall style you wish to create.”

Start by making sure your room is homely while also being functional for all activities it will serve. “The secret has always been zoning, so assigning specific areas to, for example, cooking or relaxing while keeping other parts of the space flexible,” Keith Atkins, director of design at Designspace London, suggests. However, even this is sometimes not quite enough – especially in extremely large rooms. “Broken plan can be a more effective way to define areas without losing the light and space that make open plan so attractive,” he continues.

A key element of creating a cohesive open-plan kitchen-dining-living area is considering your materials and opting for the same or similar colour palettes throughout. “This creates a sense of continuity and flow – it could be as simple as using the same flooring for the entire room,” advises Laura Davie, marketing coordinator at Cosentino. Alternatively, use the same material for the worktops and fireplace surround.” Consider your kitchen layout, too – a single galley frees up lots of floor area and keeps ingredients and cookware close to hand.

“Also think about storage to help create a stylish and clutter-free scheme,” says Neil McDonald, design manager at Moores. Lucy Dunstan, product manager at Smeg, agrees. “Built-in appliances are also great, especially in modern kitchen-diners, as they create a sleek and streamlined look,” she adds.

But if the minimal style isn't for you, going that extra step to a broken-plan space could make all the difference, according to Laura. “It's gaining increasing popularity as a design that slightly disrupts the flow of an open-plan scheme – enough to create nooks or define zones without building walls.” Use different materials, textures, and colours to create sections or, as Daniel Bowler, director at Eggersmann UK, suggests, “include an island with integrated seating to divide the kitchen from the dining and living areas”. Open shelving is also ideal as a room divider. “Even at full height it won't completely block out the light and restrict movement, but will help zone the space and create a bit of privacy,” Daniel says. A glass partition would achieve this, too, while enabling light to flow through.

But remember, both schemes need to be large enough to comfortably and practically encompass all activities for your family plus provide ample storage. “You may need to create quiet areas for homework or separate spaces for noisier times,” says Richard Moore, design director at Martin Moore. If you are extending, involve your kitchen designer before you apply for planning permission, as the layout needs to be in place before doorways and windows are set in stone. Also involve them early if you're knocking through walls and joining up existing rooms. “The kitchen determines where services such as plumbing, lighting, electrics, and drainage will be sited, too,” adds Richard. “Don't forget ventilation and extraction – especially if your space includes a living room with soft furnishings. Windows, sliding doors, or a strong extractor will help keep food smells at bay,” says Elly Simmons, director at Herringbone Kitchens. Also plan your lighting early. “Don't only have task illumination, but add solutions that can set the mood for entertaining or cosy evenings in, too,” says Neil. Thinking about going open or broken plan? Read on for more inspiration and tips on successfully creating both designs... >

open plan

This rustic kitchen, which was part of a barn conversion, features a reclaimed pinewood finish. Kitchens from The Main Company start from £25,000.

This kitchen-diner can be kept open or sectioned off – ideal for any occasion. Designspace London kitchens start from £25,000 – this scheme uses Modulnova's Fly collection.

HIDDEN AWAY

If you think that one day you'll want to be able to close off the space, large doors that slide into the wall are a great option to include in a broken-plan scheme.

Architectural features

To retain a higher level of privacy, why not create a large archway within the scheme – instead of removing a whole wall – to connect the spaces? **KBB**



ELINOR SAYS...

The large marble island in the middle of this scheme creates a focal point while the breakfast bar adds a contemporary twist to the design.