

FOCUS

# Kitchens with soul

The eat-in kitchen is back with a good dollop of style as families embrace a more relaxed approach to dining, writes Kirsten Craze

The kitchen has always been the centre of attention for families. It's where the kids do homework while the adults pay the bills, entertain, cook and, increasingly, eat in. While we want the most popular room in the home to look great, an eat-in kitchen is once again a high priority for many.

Architect Adriano Pupilli says as the formal dining room has fallen out of favour, the eat-in kitchen is flavour of the month.

"That formality isn't really important in our lives anymore," Adriano says. "If we can sit down and have a meal as a family, it might not be in a separate room, but we don't seem to mind."

Adriano says as we move on from fully separated floorplans, now we want almost the opposite with open-plan layouts.

"We want maximum flexibility, without having dead spaces that remain unused," he says.

"It's making spaces work harder."

He says the popularity of eat-in kitchens is also about connectivity for modern families.

"It's a social arrangement," he says. "Meal preparation is a social activity, so kitchens aren't just about the consumption of food."

Author and cooking teacher, Aneka Manning of BakeClub, says an eat-in kitchen makes more sense for busy families.

"We've seen this real shift away from families having meals around the dining table so if you can make meal time less formal, and it might even be around the kitchen bench, then it means everyone is still going to be connecting and talking, even if just at breakfast time," she says.

"And an eat-in kitchen is a bonus for the home cook.

"It just means you don't have to feel left out, or like you're rushing to get the next course out so you can join the conversation."

More: [adrianopupilli.com.au](http://adrianopupilli.com.au); [bakeclub.com.au](http://bakeclub.com.au)



Stylist and design podcaster Lauren Keenan says as eat-in kitchens are busy places, so establishing a good flow is essential. "When selecting a dining table, first you need to look at size and placement," she says. "To be a functional space, you need to be able to navigate around it and have room for all the functions of the kitchen like opening the dishwasher, fridge or cupboards and not having chairs in the way."

For tight spaces, Lauren says a round table is better for manoeuvrability but extension tables offer more flexibility. "Mark out on the floor with tape or string the footprint of the table and chairs you're thinking of buying," she says. "Also, allow about 50cm for each chair to come out from around the table."

More: [laurenkeenan.com.au](http://laurenkeenan.com.au)

To minimise the impact a kitchen setting has on smaller spaces, Lauren says chairs that tuck in easily against the table are best. "(Hans Wegner) Wishbone chairs look lovely, for example, but they're really going to stick out," she says. "If you have an island bench, the stool choice is key. "Make sure the stool is the right height for the bench you're going to be sitting at," says Lauren, whose work is pictured. You also need to consider who will be using the stools and for how long. She suggests stools with back support for kids doing homework or those sitting for extended periods. "Lower back support can make all the difference," she says.

The island bench is such a key element in contemporary kitchens, it is worth planning them carefully. "Think about integrating the eating area into the existing island bench, or at least complement what the island is already doing," says architect Adriano Pupilli, whose work is pictured. "You can plug a table into the side of the island bench most of the time and then pull it away from the island and sit around it." For Aneka, an island bench is key. "It's where people can gather for tea or a chat but also a preparation space," she says.



**TIME FOR DINNER**

Eat-in kitchens are an increasingly common sight in open-plan living spaces, but they don't have to be daggy. This set-up from Poliform places style firmly on par with function, combining a streamlined workspace with a stylish and inviting eating area. A dramatic pendant light adds a little glamour.



*clear the air*

**"IT'S A SOCIAL ARRANGEMENT. MEAL PREPARATION IS A SOCIAL ACTIVITY, SO KITCHENS AREN'T JUST ABOUT THE CONSUMPTION OF FOOD"**



When dinner is served, you don't want friends and family to have a bad taste in their mouth because the eat-in kitchen feels more barbecue area than fine dining. Today's rangehoods range from fixed, retractable and undermounted units to ensure a healthy and happy space.

"Having a high performing rangehood is essential for the suction and removal of cooking smells and oils in your kitchen," says Danielle Sukari, category manager at Winning Appliances. "We recommend a rangehood with a streamlined and unobtrusive design as well as being quiet."

Picture: [poliformaustralia.com.au](http://poliformaustralia.com.au) More: [winningappliances.com.au](http://winningappliances.com.au)

V1 - TELE01Z01H0