

the light fantastic

High ceilings and huge windows are the raw materials for a spacious, light-bathed family kitchen in this Grade II Listed Georgian house in Islington
Feature Julia Faiers
Photography Rachael Smith

Jo and Tommy bought the contemporary table and benches from Butnaup, but then covered the table-top with dark brown leather from Alma Home. The made-to-measure table-top matches the colour of the units and makes a hard-wearing, chic surface





FILM producer Tommy and his partner Jo had a job and a half on their hands when they moved into their Grade II Listed Georgian home with the intention of renovating the entire house. Planning officers kept a watchful eye on them, preventing them from changing the shape of rooms or going anywhere near the original Georgian cornicing. Luckily for them, however, the kitchen was a different story. As a vast, barn-like structure was tacked on to the end of

the house in the 1950s, and linked to the original property by an ugly mish-mash of plastic and corrugated iron, they weren't bound by the same level of rigid planning restrictions, meaning they would have far greater freedom to let their imaginations run riot. A good job, considering that the cavernous room - previously a refectory for nuns and a homeless shelter's soup kitchen - was in dire need of a complete overhaul.

Jo and Tommy's first stop was Barbara Weiss Architects. Their previous home was situated above a book shop, where they found an architecture book written by Barbara. Her practice's style and outlook suited them perfectly, so when they realised the offices were just down the road from them in Islington, bringing them on board seemed a natural step. Jo says, "We asked them to design us a light, bright modern kitchen with lots of glass, that would also be kid-friendly

for our three children Dylan (8), Toby (4) and Tamsin (2), with an outdoor space for us all to enjoy." Nick Jamison, the architect they worked with at Barbara Weiss Architects, adds, "The first thing we did was to chop the old structure in half to provide a decent-sized outdoor patio space - the previous building extended all the way down to the boundary of the property, up to a children's playground."

Tommy and Jo were keen to ensure as much light as possible would flow through the kitchen from the end patio windows, which they wanted to look as 'frameless' as possible. This prevented the use of energy-efficient double glazing, so to counteract the inevitable loss of heat in such a large space, extra insulation was packed into the walls and floors. With this beautiful, expansive space, they wanted to keep the kitchen itself as simple and streamlined as possible. Nick worked

through some ideas with Jo and Tommy, which they took to leading German kitchen company Bulthaup. The design which won them all over uses the company's System 25 kitchen, and comprises one wall of sleek, built-in storage and integrated appliances, with two islands that face each other - one with washing-up facilities, the other a cooking station with hob and extractor.

With such a light, open space, Jo and Tommy could afford to be bold with their choice of finish for the unit doors, opting for dramatic dark brown oak that could have looked oppressive in a smaller, darker kitchen. The rich wood is tempered by aluminium stripping on the edges of the doors, and by the stainless steel worktops used for both island units. Nick took the industrial feel one step further by making the stainless steel extractor over the cook station an

integral part of the kitchen design. The extractor is ceiling-mounted, but because the ceiling is so high, the tall shaft of metal ducting, which soars upwards to penetrate the roof, becomes a central feature of the kitchen.

The simple lay-out of one wall of units and two islands helps Jo to keep the kitchen looking good. "I hate to admit that we are pretty obsessive about tidiness and making sure everything looks clean. With this design, there's so much open space, we can see straight away if any of the kids' toys have fallen on the floor or if anything is out of place!" But this kitchen isn't just about show-home good looks. With three kids, a cat and partner, Tommy, to





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feed, Jo says the kitchen is there to be used, not just admired. "It's ergonomically designed so that when I'm cooking, I can pretty much stand in one place and everything is within reaching distance. And when I'm standing at the islands, I can see what the children are up to in here, and I can see through into the rest of the house, too."

The way the kitchen links to the rest of the house is one of its design high-points. Whereas before it had been a dank corridor covered in plastic roofing, now the entrance to the kitchen - with its large window and sloping glass roof - is flooded with light. After the more moderate renovation work restricted by the Georgian building's listed status elsewhere in the house, the bright, glass-filled corridor provides a taster of the truly contemporary design that lies downstairs in the kitchen beyond. Jo adds, "Everyone from friends to workmen are surprised when they enter the kitchen - it takes their breath away. We couldn't be happier with it, too. We live in this room."

Below: The kitchen is a very spacious room with a large island unit and a long wooden countertop. The kitchen is a very bright room with a large window and a sloping glass roof. The kitchen is a very bright room with a large window and a sloping glass roof. The kitchen is a very bright room with a large window and a sloping glass roof.



ESSENTIAL INFORMATION
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 Flooring Piedra Piano Extra honed limestone, Stone Age, 020 7384 9090/estone.co.uk
 Leather table-top Alma Home 020 7377 0762/almahome.co.uk