



EXTERIOR Originally a pair of dwellings for workers on a local estate, the cottage has hanging roof tiles and neo-gothic touches typical of Edwardian properties. St Swithun (left) is one of the couple's favourite scented climbing roses.

LIVING ROOM By contrast, the interior has a contemporary country look with white walls, natural materials and clean shapes. **Curtains;** armchairs, similar from Ikea. **Table,** similar from John Lewis.



Old and new

'CLASSIC OUTSIDE, CONTEMPORARY INSIDE' WAS THE DREAM COMBINATION FOR BARBARA WEISS AND ALAN LEIBOWITZ'S WEEKEND BOLT HOLE

From outside, Barbara Weiss's country cottage looks traditionally English, right down to the fragrant garden, and the pretty pink roses rambling around the weathered brickwork. Inside, however, is a different story: the house has a surprisingly chic, contemporary feel with whitewashed walls, wooden floors and very simple contemporary furnishings.

The detached Edwardian cottage originally comprised two agricultural workers' dwellings, which had been knocked through and extended at some point in their past. Both Barbara and her husband, Alan Leibowitz, loved the picturesque exterior and felt the property was the right size for them. And as an

architect, Barbara knew that with improvements she could turn it into the weekend and holiday retreat they wanted.

'We had been searching for a bolt hole that was no more than two hours' drive from London for quite a while,' she says. 'We wanted a place where we could spend weekends entertaining our family and friends. Being half Italian and half American, I was more used to the mountain regions of Italy than the English countryside, but over time the gentle hills of this part of the world grew on me.'

'As we had been renting nearby, we became more and more attracted to the gentle pace of life in the small towns and villages in Wiltshire, and decided this was definitely

AT HOME WITH...

OWNERS Barbara Weiss is an architect who lives here with her husband, Alan Leibowitz, and their three children, Benjy, 23, Francesca, 20, and Matteo, 17. They moved in 10 years ago

HOUSE Dating from early 20th century
ROOMS Living room/study, kitchen/dining room, utility, cloakroom/shower, three bedrooms, two shower rooms





KITCHEN/DINING AREA Abundant storage is the focus of this space. Barbara commissioned builders to construct the space to her design using Ikea cabinet carcasses teamed with bespoke moisture-resistant MDF cupboard fronts. The worksurfaces combine the beauty of walnut with the practicality of marble, while the shelves above the sink (right) are made from unfinished softwood. Barbara loves the look of white crockery on open wooden shelves, but industrial lighting gives the country-style kitchen a harder edge. **Builders,** Acorn Builders Pewsey. **Metal pendant lights,** Original BTC. **Table; chairs,** Ikea. **Tablecloth,** The Conran Shop. **HALLWAY** Any nook or cranny that could accommodate cupboards has been fashioned into useful storage, including the space under the stairs.



the place to buy a property. It is rural yet close to countless cultural highlights,' she says.

Barbara and Alan realised they would need to make a number of changes to ensure the house would work for them. 'We wanted bigger rooms, so we gutted the cottage, changed things around, installed new doors, renewed windows, and opened up the space to let the outside in,' Barbara says. The overhaul of the cottage took the couple exactly one year.

Their plan was to create a contrast to their main home in London, which is more traditionally furnished. The mood here is intended to be more modern and informal, where high-street

buys, such as vintage Habitat, and contemporary designer pieces are set against antique items.

Storage plays a pivotal role. 'The architecture of any space is greatly enhanced by doing away with clutter,' says Barbara. 'It is possible to create clever storage for every sort of belonging. Good storage allows you to display or conceal; to be a hoarder, or a minimalist. I love storage – you can never have enough of it – and it looks good even when it is empty,' she says.

Barbara certainly practises what she preaches because storage within the cottage has been immaculately organised with bespoke cupboards and plenty of shelving. The hub of

WHAT MAKES THIS HOUSE A HOME...

'It has to be the kitchen. Everybody congregates there to talk and cook'





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MAIN BEDROOM Removing a low false ceiling has opened up the room, and increased the light and sense of space. The furniture comprises a few well-chosen pieces, including a country-style rocking chair and a 1950s wall-mounted dressing table. **Walls**, painted in Brilliant White by Dulux. **Antique dressing table**, Bonhams. **Rocking chair**, similar from The Real Wood Furniture Company. **BATHROOM** The contemporary fittings are both stylish and easy to maintain. **Square basin**, similar from Bathroom Heaven. **Waxman unglazed tiles**, Tower Ceramics. **Light fitting**, similar from John Lewis.

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On our doorstep...

WILTSHIRE & BERKSHIRE

Barbara Weiss and Alan Leibowitz recommend their favourite local haunts

VISIT... 'Stonehenge (01722 343830, english-heritage.org.uk), near Amesbury in Wiltshire. We also like visiting the Roche Court sculpture park and art gallery (01980 862244, sculpture.uk.com) near Salisbury, where you can see more than 100 contemporary pieces in 20 acres of garden' **SHOP AT...** 'Cobbs Farm Shop & Kitchen (01488 686770, cobbsfarmshop.co.uk) near Hungerford in Berkshire has everything, from a butcher, fishmonger, delicatessen, florist, PYO fruit in the summer, and even a five-acre vineyard'

GO FOR A MEAL AT... 'The Queens Arms (01488 648757, queensarmshotel.co.uk) at East Garston, Berkshire, for real ales and tasty, seasonal food'

the house is the effortlessly stylish open-plan kitchen/dining room, from where French windows open onto the garden.

The couple, who are both enthusiastic about cooking and entertaining, enjoy this room to the full. 'We have had 15 people around the dining table, but sometimes there's just the two of us here. This space allows us to be flexible,' Barbara says.

They are particularly pleased with the kitchen flooring, which has the dual attractions of durability and style. 'We chose economical, unfussy soft wood, which we limewashed and varnished, leaving the grain exposed,' Barbara says. This flooring is carried through to other parts of the house, including

the cosy living room, which cleverly incorporates a study area. Upstairs, the mood is practical yet still eye-catching. The bedrooms are built into the eaves, and daylight floods the rooms, unfettered by fussy window dressings, making them feel bright and fresh. Colourful bed linen brings an injection of colour and represents a rare departure from the otherwise neutral palette.

'In the next few years, we will probably renew the extension,' says Barbara. But for the moment, the restful cottage and garden provide all that she and Alan require of a home in the country.

Barbara Weiss Architects, 020 7222 4935, barbaraweissarchitects.com.

Be inspired by... Barbara's kitchen



STYLE TIP Painted chairs add a splash of colour to a neutral kitchen.



HOW TO... SELECT KITCHEN WALL STORAGE

- For a sleek, contemporary look, fit a horizontal strip of cupboards or open shelves. Or for a vintage effect, hang a carved wall shelf (try Dabor).
- To maximise storage in a small kitchen, build in tall wall cabinets that fit flush to the ceiling.
- Make use of the gap between wall units and worktop by fitting an extra cabinet between the two. Ikea's Osthama glass-door wall cabinet is just 20cm deep.
- Break up a run of wall units with a fitted plate rack or wine storage.
- Light glass-fronted cabinets inside using LED lights (try Sensio).



1 Time pendant light, 28cm diameter, £162, Davey Lighting. 2 Wall clock, 38cm diameter, £60, Roger Lascelles. 3 Wine basket, H37cm by W35cm by D24cm, £24.50, The Present Finder. 4 Chimney cooker hood, H106cm by W60cm, from £350, Neff. 5 Kitchen unit, H92cm by W185cm by D62.5cm, col French Gray, £3,798 with granite worktop, sink and tap, Barnes of Ashburton. 6 Rochelle chair, H89cm by W49cm by D55cm, col Red, £249 for two, Made.com. 7 Morphy Richards Elypta Espresso coffee machine, H31cm by W26cm by D33cm, £149.95, John Lewis. 8 Livia tablecloth, 150cm by 250cm, £57.50, Occa-Home. 9 New York salt and pepper mill set, H18.5cm, £19.50, Marks & Spencer. 10 Hoganas 1.5 litre teapot, £74.99, Scandi Living.

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ROOM IDEAS

FIND THE PERFECT PAINT



Paloma



Country Grey



Paris Grey

All £16.95 for 1 litre of Chalk paint, Annie Sloan.

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