

# The culinary man cave

From Teppanyaki hotplates to breadmakers, the heart of the home is getting increasingly hi-tech. *Emily Brooks* enters the ultimate bachelor kitchens

Men certainly make it when it comes to cooking as a professional calling – four out of five of UK chefs are men, according to data released by the Office of National Statistics.

And then there are the men in their own kitchen at home, who imagine that they're professional chefs only by dint of the sheer amount of equipment they've surrounded themselves with – breadmaker, bain-marie etc.

More and more gents are coming out of the man cave and into the kitchen – and that's having a knock-on effect on kitchen design.

For an increasing proportion of our projects for private clients, the man is driving the brief for the kitchen design and specification," says Tom Wickstead of 202 Design. If the male partner is the main cook in the household, then we are often presented with very specific appliance requirements. Steamers, barbecue grills, Teppanyaki hotplates and commercial-level extraction are all fairly commonplace, though also they are increasingly interested in the material specification as well – working durability, hardware finishes, internal mechanisms and the general layout.

The men now taking a lead with the cooking are doing so against a broader backdrop of the kitchen being redefined as the off-street "heart of the house". No longer a place to confine yourself in a way, it's a sociable place for togetherness, where cooking might be just one activity among many. It's not about domestic drudgery, but a way of relaxing and delivering something wholesome to the family.

"Oh, it's definitely not a chore."



Show-off: the ultimate bachelor kitchen designed by Lawson Robb, above; a FABRICA kitchen in a Mount Avon home, right



Pukka: the Clerkenwell home where Jamie Oliver lived and filmed his first series of *The Naked Chef* (Savills, £2.75m)



In excess: the Beau House penthouse kitchen which is being built by Dukelease Properties and to be priced above £15m

says Fraser Booth, who lives with his wife, Mariama, and their young children in west London, and does the lion's share of preparing meals. "I use cooking to switch off and take my mind off everything that's happened during the day – you open the fridge or the larder, and see what you can make. And at the weekends it's more about everyone eating around the table together. It's definitely where we spend the most time."

He says that when it came to re-doing their house, the kitchen was the only place where he wanted the final say, and was highly exacting about the layout and spec.

That included investing in an Elica extractor hood that sits flush with the ceiling, rather than have a hanging model over the kitchen island that would block sightlines in the open-plan space – the kind of attention to detail that any architect would be proud of.

Like Booth, if you ask Douglas Higgins what his kitchen's like, he might be more likely to reel off a list of appliances first. "Miele throughout – an oven, combi microwave, built-in coffee machine, and a wine fridge with three temperatures," Higgins is the chief executive of developers

London & Aberdeen Group, and has just taken up residence in an apartment at one of its properties, Ryger House in St James's. His kitchen came from Rossana, a top-end Italian brand that is known for its integrated technology – handle-free cabinetry – that pops open with a gentle knock, for example. There's no other room in the average house where you'll find quite so much gadgetry as in the kitchen, so it's no wonder men want to get more involved.

"I always say, if James Bond had a kitchen it would be a Rossana one," says brand director Chanda Pandya. "We're finding that men are increasingly taking more interest in kitchens as they're becoming more technical."

Equally appealing to men, perhaps, is its use of high-end materials such as bronze, deep-veined marble and dark wood, with curved-back, unfussy outlines. At the most masculine end of the spectrum the units are almost monolithic – wrapped in stone and with the messier aspects such as sinks and countertop gadgets hidden away behind full-height doors.

The superb engineering behind it is as seductive as the design and materials, and Darren Miller, who brought the Rossana brand to the UK, compares the kitchens to a Rolls-Royce or a Bentley: restrained elegance on the outside but with all this amazing tech behind the shell.

Hidden, sleek technology is on the up: a new countertop by Italian design studio Tropic has pressure sensors in it to weigh ingredients, and a sink that appears with a single gesture. Another, by German design studio Kram/Weishaar, has circuitry within to allow the surface to keep your drink cool and plates hot.

What might the ultimate bachelor kitchen look like? Aside from high-end appliances, the other trend that seems to be male-led is that of the kitchen as entertaining space – for showing off your skills to friends.

With open-plan now the norm for new builds and refurbishments, no one wants a kitchen that feels too clinical, and some want one that is an out-and-out showpiece.

Interior designers Lawson Robb recently created a kitchen for a bachelor featuring a large black marble table that guests can sit around to view the "culinary theatre" occurring at the adjacent island unit. Timber paneling, patinated bronze cabinetry and fireplace make the room feel more like a study.

Glassware by Linley – for savouring a single malt – and German brand Nesamk are suitably masculine accessories.

It's got to be a good thing for both genders where men are taking more of a lead when it comes to the cooking.

But there's still a niggling question, though. Who's doing the washing up?



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## GET THE LOOK YES, CHEF!

Quad decanter £65, by Annabel James (annabeljames.co.uk)



Cast iron griddle pan £99, by Le Creuset (johnlewis.com)



French coffee grinder £38, by Raspberry Mash (raspberrymash.co.uk)

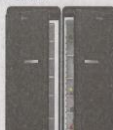


Toaster £249.95, by Dualit (johnlewis.com)



Copper Pendants light £326, by Oscar Home (oscarhome.dk)

Retro fridge and freezer £1,449.98, by Swan (very.co.uk)



Ravelli cutter £4.99, by Kitchen Craft (websites.com)



Hi-tech Takle kitchen counter Price on application, by Tropic (offmat.marmarredo.com)



Integrated sink Price on application, by Offmat (offmat.marmarredo.com)



Retro frying pans £24.99, by Swan (very.co.uk)



Utensil carousel £58, by Joseph Joseph (johnlewis.com)



Hi-tech Takle kitchen counter Price on application, by Tropic (offmat.marmarredo.com)



Chrome coffee maker £549.95 by Bagatti (johnlewis.com)



Recycling unit £195, by Joseph Joseph (johnlewis.com)



Diamond glasses £19.95, by REDS (reds.co.uk)



Cast iron casserole dish £145, by Le Creuset (johnlewis.com)

