

MIXING IT UP IN THE kitchen



Photography by Andrew Hives. whitepebbleinteriors.com.au

Looking to freshen up your kitchen without a complete and costly overhaul? Maybe your contemporary kitchen needs a little industrial edge, or your coastal-look space could use an infusion of the Hamptons. Step outside the box and create your own signature-style kitchen

WORDS CARROL BAKER



Inject character alongside minimalism with timber. Photography by Prue Ruscoe. brookeaitkendesign.com.au

Style is by definition a fluid concept, as many styles borrow certain elements from others. French Provincial and Hamptons share the same cool elegance — whites and lighter tones, with hints of colour. While Hamptons has more of a coastal vibe, French Provincial can be more detailed, more ornate. Industrial and minimalist are both simple and understated. Combined, the edgy look of industrial bodes well with the sleek minimalist look. Contemporary and modern can also be minimalist; throw in some warm timber features and slimline profiles and you have a Scandi element in the mix.

Coco Chanel famously said: “The most courageous act is still to think for yourself. Aloud.” And she wasn’t wrong. Be brave and create your own signature kitchen. Play with textures and experiment with colours. Gather fabric swatches and samples of timbers, tiles and metals as well as imagery of things you love.

Brooke Aitken, from Brooke Aitken Design, says when assisting clients, she often begins with a few simple questions. “I ask, what makes you feel good? What makes you happy? Then we dig a little deeper and discover the looks they like might be a contemporary kitchen and also a Hamptons-style kitchen. It might be a contemporary kitchen, but with a detail on the stone or a pencil round tile, so it has a softer feel like the Hamptons-look.”

HARMONY BETWEEN STYLES

When blending styles, it’s not just a case of throw in a pop of colour here or replace a kitchen knob or two there, although ultimately that can be part of the process. Creating a signature kitchen begins with the basic materials — the cabinetry, handles, door fronts, benchtops, tapware and splashbacks. Darren James, from Darren James Interiors, says he likes to let the materials speak for themselves. “I love the design to be super

simple, but then I’ll grab some elements from other styles to highlight it,” he says. “For example, one look I love is adding industrial elements to a modern minimalist interior. With the minimalist aesthetic of an interior you can keep details simple and let the materials do the talking.”

Darren says paring things back can pave the way for a fluid crossover of styles. “If you want a Hamptons look with more modern elements, reduce the mouldings. To get clean lines you can still have profile fronts, which gives it a more a modern take, but have a squarer edge or finer benchtop,” he says.

Perhaps you like the idea of minimalist but find it a little cold? Darren says the key is to introduce natural elements. “Natural timber and adding greenery soften spaces and adds more warmth,” he says.

Even styles that you might think seem far removed from each other can find common ground by mixing up an element or two.



THIS PAGE
 Soften industrial edges with natural elements.
 Photography by Rix Ryan Photography.
darrenjames.com.au



Photography by Prue Ruscoe.
brookeaitkendesign.com.au



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These black stools contrast nicely with the softer kitchen design. Photography by Chris Groenhout. whitepebbleinteriors.com.au



DESIGNER TIP



Frances Conway, White Pebble Interiors:
 “Working with tones is key – are you a cool or warm colour palette person? People generally wear the colours they like to be surrounded by. It can be jarring if you have warm and cool elements sitting together. Not only your kitchen, but your whole home should be warm or cool.”

Frances Conway, from White Pebble Interiors, says industrial and Hamptons can definitely go together, for example. “Lighting and metal elements traditionally associated with industrial style can be used in Hamptons ... beaten-metal light fittings are a soft industrial style you can use in Hamptons instead of the traditional glass pendants,” she says.

Less is more. If you’re refreshing your kitchen with some style elements, ideally it should balance and not be a mish-mash of styles dominating the space. It can help to introduce just a few elements that cross over to another

style (unless eclectic is who you are, of course) and some designers have been able to create extraordinary kitchens that are exactly that.

Understanding scale is important. Scale defines the size of one object in relation to another and how they both sit within a space; it needs to be in proportion. A slimline benchtop, for example, might not sit well with chunky French country chairs.

Don’t be afraid to unleash your creativity, however. It’s okay to experiment with looks you love, according to Brooke. “I don’t think there’s any style you can’t play with as long as you do it

with care and an aesthetic eye,” she says. “That’s the way design continues to grow and evolve when designers move away from one look and slowly move into something else.”

Like most western countries, Australia could be doing much more to reduce waste. Updating your kitchen instead of replacing all of it is one way to help keep discarded goods out of landfill. “Why throw things away when they aren’t broken?” Darren asks. “You can just change and update your kitchen by bringing it back to life with a fresh new look.”

Reclaimed or refurbished elements can cost a fraction of new and inject character into a space. For example, some retro kitchen chairs at an island bench will add a dash of modernism to a contemporary kitchen.

Remember to tailor your textures. Just as different cabinet styles can co-exist in harmony in a kitchen, so too can textural elements. The smooth shiny surface of a stainless bench and concrete walls in an industrial design can offer a welcome contrast with a warm earthy timber tabletop or island bench you might ordinarily find in a Scandi kitchen.

COST-EFFECTIVE STYLE CHANGES

A new kitchen can cost anywhere from \$25,000 upwards, more if you enlist the services of a professional kitchen designer or architect. With an open-plan room, installing a completely new kitchen can have a flow-on effect to your budget if you need to replace fixtures, fittings and other elements in other spaces to integrate them with the new kitchen.

Moving plumbing and gas fittings and replacing custom cabinetry can be very costly in a kitchen makeover, but there are smaller changes that can create a big impact for a fraction of the price.

One relatively small modification that can bring dramatic change is the kitchen splashback,



Photography by Rix Ryan Photography.
darrenjames.com.au



Some simple additions can make for a seriously classy kitchen. Photography by Brock Beazley Photography. phoenixtapware.com.au



brabbu.com



montauklightingco.com

DESIGNER TIP



Darren James, Darren James Interiors: "If you're changing appliances, keep the same brand as typically the sizing doesn't change too much. Change the brand and it can be an ever-so-slight difference that will affect how it fits into the space."

Brooke notes. "Splashbacks introduce texture, colour and light into a kitchen and it's a fairly easy change that can modernise a dated one."

If you're short on bench space and want to add a modern feel, Brooke suggests swapping electric hotplates for induction. "Updating from an old electric hotplate to a super-contemporary induction hotplate is a great idea — and when you aren't using the hotplates you can use it as extra bench space," she says.

Changing handles is another inexpensive way to update a tired kitchen. Frances says new handles can completely change the look. "Leather-

style handles can create a soft industrial look, and a timber concave knob can lend itself to a Scandinavian-style kitchen," she says.

Resurfacing benchtops costs a fraction of replacing them, and refreshing cabinetry fronts is another budget way to give a kitchen a new look if the carcasses are in good condition. You can also buy laminate paint to change the colour of kitchen cupboards. To modernise a dated dark kitchen, Frances says you should paint it white. "It can be revolutionary — such a game changer for the look and feel within that space. Add some new handles and you have a brand new kitchen!" she says.



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Mix and match with colour, texture and style. designshanghai.com



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DESIGNER TIP



Brooke Aitken from Brooke Aitken Design: "Hanging art on the wall in the kitchen makes a huge difference to the space for relatively little cost. You might find you don't have to change the kitchen at all."

Accessorising with stools or chairs is also an effective way to inject new style. Darren says it's an easy change that can reap dividends. "A timber upholstered seat, high or low back, curved or rounded, sits within the classic element," he explains. "If you want to change it to modern, it's a bit more refined so mix in leather or metal."

Ultimately, confidence is key. Putting yourself in the hands of design experts who can guide you in the right direction can not only save you time and money, but introduce ideas you might never have thought of. Frances says designers can also access products homeowners can't. "I often get comments like, 'I'd never have found anything like that, I had no idea where to go'," she says. "It's our job to be ahead of the market. We also have the confidence and experience."

Frances says designers can also push you out of your comfort zone — just a little — which yields some surprising results. "I'll often say to my clients, 'I'm going to show you a red herring.' It's not on brief, but it's something that's come out of our creative process. They'll often go with the red herring!" 🍣