

# 'I'm happiest when the kitchen is full of friends and family'

Interior designer Claire Palma, 41, lives with her husband José, 40, and their five-year-old daughter Daisy in a three-bedroom house in Epsom

Eggs nest



There's always space for tall vases



PHOTOGRAPHS: James Berthoud







**T**he moment Claire Palma saw the tiny kitchen of the 1920s semi she and husband José would go on to buy, she began visualising how she would extend it to cope with the big parties she loves throwing.

Claire explains: 'We were moving from a two-bedroom apartment with no outside space and I was desperate to live somewhere with a garden where we could entertain.'

'The kitchen was tiny, but the garden was huge, and I could immediately see the potential to extend so that we would have a big downstairs space that could incorporate both a kitchen and dining area.'

In their roles as owners of Inspirational Interiors, Claire and José are used to helping clients maximise their living space and weren't daunted by the amount of work involved.

'José is a joiner by trade and project manages our interior design projects,' she says. 'To some people it may have seemed like a big job, but this is what we do every day at work. I couldn't wait to get stuck in.'

### Evolution, not revolution

Claire re-did the designs and layouts several times until she was sure they were perfect. The couple chose B&Q units and José adapted them so they had a bespoke kitchen for a fraction of the price it would usually cost.

Claire says: 'We chose a shaker style, but the doors have a bevelled edge so they are more classic.' As a self-confessed 'neat freak', Claire made sure there was a home for every utensil and piece of crockery.

She chose Farrow & Ball pale powder for the wall and a taupe Corian work surface with wood-strip flooring. 'If you have a kitchen-dining room, as we have, it makes sense to keep the basics, like units, flooring and work surfaces, neutral. Then you can easily update the space with high-street fabrics and cushion covers.'

'I'm constantly changing and moving things around. All it takes to re-cover the dining chairs is a staple gun and some new fabric. I like to freshen up the living space and see things as they evolve.'

That was five years ago and Claire says she is still as happy with the kitchen now as she was the day they finished it.

'We do enjoy eating out, but we're more likely to be found at home, me cooking while José chats to me and Daisy plays where we can see her. We've created a wonderful space for us to enjoy as a family and share with friends.'







Claire enjoys the workspace provided by her expanded kitchen-dining room

## ➤ Favourite kitchen gadget

'I love to listen to my radio when I'm baking. My favourite station is Heart FM'



Claire's larder

Claire loves updating her fabrics



## What would you change?

'I wish we had two big ovens so I could bake a cake and roast some meat at the same time.'

## 10 reasons Claire loves her kitchen

- 1 Being able to have lots of people around. Twenty guests isn't unusual for us.
- 2 The amount of workspace either side of the hob and the food prep area near the fridge.
- 3 The position of the washing machine. It's down the step to the dining room so it doesn't interfere with the kitchen.
- 4 Having storage for crockery near the table. It makes for far less to-ing and fro-ing.
- 5 My vase storage area above the hob. Tall vases can be an awkward shape, but this is the ideal place for them.
- 6 The classic design. It won't date and it means we can make small, inexpensive changes to update the space.
- 7 My made-to-measure larder, which is painted in Farrow & Ball skimming stone. I can immediately see what I need.
- 8 We in-filled above the units: there's no gap up to the ceiling so it's very easy to clean.
- 9 The back of the house is south-facing and with the doors onto the decking open, it's as though the garden comes into the house.
- 10 The Cole & Son wallpaper seems to change texture with the light.



Would you like to see your kitchen featured in Grub? Send an email and a photo to [surreyeditor@grubmagazine.co.uk](mailto:surreyeditor@grubmagazine.co.uk) with 'My kitchen' in the subject box.