

# KITCHENS WITH CHARACTER

Quirky free-standing pieces, open shelves, lush foliage and striking artworks are creative ways to bring colour, texture and personality into your kitchen

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**T**he fitted kitchen was a mid-century phenomenon, when kitchen design became all about creating a modern, streamlined look, focusing on maximising efficiency and creating space for new labour-saving appliances. While most of us would not be without our built-in dishwasher, there's been a movement away from the angular look of the traditional fitted kitchen, inspired by the softer eclecticism of pre-mid-century kitchens, which featured stand-alone furniture such as dressers.

Introducing statement pieces is a lovely way to break up the hard lines of convention, and add more colour and texture. This could be achieved with open shelving in reclaimed wood, or adding a glass-fronted cabinet or bespoke larder to provide stylish extra storage. Incorporating a few lifestyle elements perhaps more conventionally reserved for living rooms – such as sofas, artworks or houseplants – also creates a cosier, more familial space where people can gather and relax at any time of day. And with just a few characterful touches, your kitchen will become not just a functional space, but a room in which you'll love to linger.



## Shelf life

Beautifully styled open shelves look fabulous, but in practical terms do they work for real homes? It's true they are a magnet for dust and grease, and they may also significantly reduce your storage capacity, especially in a smaller kitchen. On the flip-side, wall cabinets can overpower a small space, while open shelves may create an airier feel.

Careful curation is key. Although the homely, jumbled look can appear charming in the right place, even this casual approach is rarely effortless to achieve. Arranging your tableware to ensure it's all coordinating and elegantly displayed is quite a skill, and you'll have to pare back your pottery collection or store some pieces away. However, opting for open shelving can be a conscious way to keep clutter at bay – if those plates don't fit the aesthetic or you already have too many cocktail glasses, then it's time to let them go.

To decide whether open shelves would work for you, consider whether you want to use them as the primary storage for your everyday tableware, or to display treasured or interesting pieces. If the former, perhaps an antique dresser might work better than shelves, especially for heavy items. If the shelves are to be mostly decorative and you're

concerned about losing storage space, you could break up a run of wall cabinets with a small section of open shelving, which creates a lighter look while still adding character, or add fitted open shelves in small spaces where a cabinet wouldn't work.

Contrasting materials can work well too – use rustic reclaimed wood or industrial-style metal shelving to provide a counterpoint to conventional cabinets. Alternatively, quirky pieces such as an antique wall-hung plate rack or a vintage open cabinet add an eclectic touch and are often easy to upcycle too.



Errol 1970s plate rack, E135, [vinterior.co](http://vinterior.co)



Original rustic wall cabinet, E165, [scaramangashop.co.uk](http://scaramangashop.co.uk)

### SOURCEBOOK

#### Open shelving

Go to [UrbanReclamation Co on Etsy](https://www.etsy.com/shop/UrbanReclamationCo) for customisable reclaimed scaffold-board shelves in a range of finishes with metal brackets, or [Ben Simpson Furniture \(bensimpsonfurniture.com\)](http://bensimpsonfurniture.com) for handcrafted shelving in sustainably sourced wood.

**Vintage cabinets** [Scaramanga \(scaramangashop.co.uk\)](http://scaramangashop.co.uk) is a great place to pick up a quirky piece of rustic storage, many from India.

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