

By replacing an underused swimming pool area with an extension one family now enjoys a grand new kitchen with a stunning marble-topped island at its centre

Words: **Ysanne Brooks** Photography: **Darren Chung**

Splashing **out**



Left: The kitchen extension sits where there was once an outdoor swimming pool. Keen to replace that wow-factor element of the house with a similarly stunning kitchen, homeowner Rebecca knew that an island wrapped in beautifully book-matched grained marble would provide exactly the stand-out feature she was after.

When Rebecca Davis moved into her Victorian semi-detached townhouse in south London 10 years ago, the swimming pool in the back garden was an unusual wow-factor addition. However, a few years and two children later, it was clear the time for lounging around the pool was gone and Rebecca, her partner Daniel, and two small children, Alice, eight, and Nat, three, could make much better use of the space.

As the house was in a conservation area, it took quite some time for Rebecca to get the planning permission for the ground-floor extension and the loft conversion the couple wanted to create the perfect family home. Anticipating the lengthy wait and subsequent negotiations, planning permission was put in very early on to raise the roof on both Rebecca's home and the neighbouring property. "Being in a conservation area meant that we'd only get permission for raising the roof height if both houses were worked on at the same time by the same builder. It was a long process, but I was happy to wait until my neighbour was able to take the project on too," reveals Rebecca.

Four years from the first application, plans were finally signed off and work could start. With so much building work going on, the family moved out, renting a house close by so they could keep an eye on the work as it progressed.

Once the ground-floor extension was under way, Rebecca began talking to a number of companies, getting quotes at various price points, eventually choosing Laurence Pidgeon to design the kitchen. "When we walked past the showroom I was drawn to a very dramatic display in the window. Then we met Laurence and he's so passionate and dedicated; we just had a rapport and I knew I could ▶



Right: A sink and hob on the island mean that anyone preparing and cooking food can chat to family and friends at the same time. Previously a fan of gas hobs, Rebecca took heed of Laurence's advice and opted for induction and is really glad she did. "It's just so fast – I love it," she says.

Bottom right: "There's a lot of traffic in this kitchen, particularly in the morning, and the breakfast table is big enough to accommodate everyone with ease," says Rebecca. The skylight and large pendants ensure there's plenty of illumination whatever the weather or time of day.

Opposite page: Rebecca had initially planned to have a step between the living area and the kitchen, marked by the wall holding the modern gas fire, but she was persuaded to have smooth transition by both the builder and Laurence, allowing the two spaces to merge seamlessly.

trust him to help me make the right decisions," says Rebecca.

Although the plan, which changed a number of times, wasn't initially to have the kitchen looking out on to the garden, Rebecca now admits this was the better choice and, with its situation, bi-fold doors were a must. "What I wanted was a big open-plan space and in this day and age if you're going to do that, then not having big open doors on to the garden seems daft. Being able to open up the whole thing is fantastic and the kids can come in and out as they please."

One thing that Rebecca was very sure she wanted was a dramatic marble top to the island. The first surface she saw was out of their budget, but Laurence helped them source something very similar. "He was amazing at helping us find a suitable alternative in a more reasonable price bracket but that still had the effect we wanted. For me, this space absolutely had to be visually pleasing. Before, when I'd walk through to the kitchen and see the pool, it was beautiful, but once that was gone I wanted to make sure I had something equally stunning in its place," reveals Rebecca.

There were some things that the couple were happy to trust Laurence on, though, including changing the initial plan, which had a step down from the living area to the kitchen space. "Laurence, the builder and the foreman were all adamant that it would spoil the natural flow of the room and I'm glad we listened to them as it really works as a complete space," Rebecca admits. "It would also have meant that we couldn't have the island." One of Rebecca's favourite things in the kitchen is also something Laurence persuaded her to have. "I wasn't sure about the induction hob," she admits. "I'm a big fan of gas, but I thought what's the point of having an expert on hand and not listening to their advice? And I'm so glad I did. It heats up almost instantly and is much more efficient than my previous hob."

The amount of storage space the new kitchen offers is huge, so much so that Rebecca has yet to fill it all. "To be honest, that was driven by Laurence rather than me. I went from having about three cupboards for a family of four to so many cupboards that I now have more space than I need really! Having said that, we doubled the size of the house so there was plenty of room to put the extra storage in. In the end I expect we'll fill it all up," she smiles.

Another favourite in the kitchen is the breakfast table. Attached to the island, perfectly placed by the glass doors, the cosy and informal low-level dining area is where the family gather in the morning. "It's fair to say this space has become the heart of our home," concludes Rebecca. "This is where everyone sits before we go to work and school – it starts the day off swimmingly." KBB









Q&A

Designer Laurence Pidgeon says...

Which elements took up the majority of the budget?
Well the furniture was the biggest item because there's quite a bit of it. The stone, however, was a disproportionately large part of the budget. We spent some time on getting it right. We looked at all kinds of options and Rebecca and Daniel visited more than one stone yard to select the perfect piece of stone. The visual effect of the grain in the stone was so important and the way the grain pattern carries up the end panel and across the top is a significant feature of the room.

Any places you managed to save money?
We used top-quality Arabescato marble, which is expensive. However, the two side worktops are in a cheaper engineered stone and this redressed the balance. The stone is different, but you don't pick this up when you're in the room.

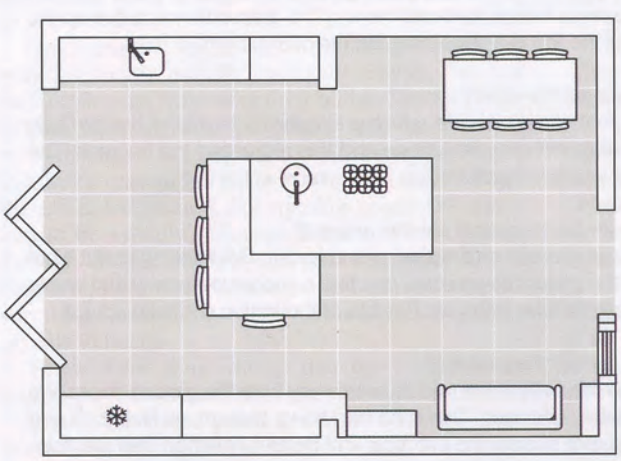
Any tips for people embarking on a similar project?
Spend as much time as you can on the design and layout. Get thinking about what you want as early in the project as you can, and find a kitchen company that wants to get involved and spend time with you. Put lots of thought in and take advice.

Any major U-turns during the project?
Yes – the kitchen was originally in the middle area away from the garden doors. We went through quite a few changes. This is no bad thing, though, as Rebecca and David have ended up with exactly the practical and beautiful kitchen they wanted.









Top left: It took quite some time, and trips to several stonemasons to look at samples, before the couple found the elegantly grained marble that provides exactly the right visual hit.

Above left: The prep sink on the island is topped with a Quooker boiling-water tap. Perfect for making hot drinks, combined with the boost function on the induction hob, it's also great for cooking pasta and vegetables in a flash.

Above: Marble work surfaces like the one on the island are a fabulous centrepiece but are pretty pricey and susceptible to staining if not treated and cared for well. As a result, Laurence recommended the couple opt for less expensive and more robust Silestone Lyra composite worktops elsewhere.

Opposite page: Stretching almost the entire width of the new extension, the bi-fold doors open up to bathe the entire kitchen in heaps of light. The opaque glass veranda leads to the garden and also helps to bring light and some privacy to the basement room below.



SourceBook

DESIGN

Designer Laurence Pidgeon at Laurence Pidgeon Kitchens and Bathrooms (020 7610 6166 or www.laurencepidgeon.com)

KITCHEN

Cabinetry Elmar Slim matt-textured lacquer kitchen in Stone Matt Goffrato, Laurence Pidgeon, as before
Worktops (on island) 30mm Arabescato marble, and pale timber breakfast bar, Laurence Pidgeon, as before; (wall runs) 30mm Lyra Silestone composite (01256 761229 or www.silestone.co.uk)
Flooring For similar try pale grey porcelain tiles, Floors of Stone (01509 234000 or www.floorsofstone.com)
Appliances Multifunction oven and combination microwave, both Siemens (0344 892 8999 or www.siemens-home.co.uk); 80cm induction hob, Atag, supplied by Laurence Pidgeon, as before; 90cm fridge-freezer, Fisher & Paykel (0800 088 6605 or www.fisherpaykel.co.uk)
Sinks Bingara 80 stainless-steel undermounted square sink, ABK Innovent (www.abk-innovent.com) and Tango stainless-steel undermounted round prep sink, both from Laurence Pidgeon, as before
Taps Fusion Round combined sink mixer and boiling-water tap, Quooker (0345 833 3555 or www.quooker.co.uk); Oxygen chrome mixer tap with pull-out swivel spout, Gessi (020 7862 6082 or www.gessi.com)
Breakfast bar chairs Dwell (0345 675 9090 or www.dwell.co.uk)
Pendant lights John Lewis (0345 604 9049 or www.johnlewis.com)
Bookcase and sofa Dwell, as before

COST

Kitchens from Laurence Pidgeon Kitchens and Bathrooms start from £20,000