

to do it in which will not only look good, but be a show place for the latest gadgets such as steam ovens, cappuccino machines, glass-covered plasma screen televisions and stainless steel-lined copper pans. These will be set in a decor of hardwearing, expensive finishes such as limestone floors and oak cabinets and granite or composite stone worktops.

There, more than ever, the kitchen is truly the heart of the home, and is where the party not only starts but continues.

## **Kitchens for flats**

Kitchens in flats differ from kitchens in houses in that they may not be on the ground floor.

Waste disposal should be made easy, possibly with refuse chutes.

Care should be taken to provide good sound insulation, particularly if they are positioned next to bedrooms (including neighbours') as machines can vibrate and be noisy.

If the kitchen is to be installed in an old building with suspended timber floors, then provision must be taken to waterproof the floor against accidental leaks from appliances.

Inevitably, flat kitchens may have to accommodate laundry machines as space may be limited elsewhere but, if at all possible, try to locate these machines in or near the bathroom or bedrooms. Where a condensing dryer is installed in a kitchen, then an additional extractor fan over the dryer may be needed to deal with the resulting condensation.

## **Small, low-cost kitchens**

Where space is at a premium, the choice of appliances must be considered first. A hob with a single oven built in underneath the counter will take up less room than a double

oven built into a tall cabinet with a separate hob. Fridge/freezers come in many combinations so that the ratio of refrigerator to freezer can be to choice – possibly with a freezer situated elsewhere. For the really small kitchen, the narrow under-counter refrigerator with integral icebox is one choice and, for the bedsitting room there are mini iceboxes which can sit on the counter, large enough to contain a little milk, butter and cheese.

Busy people may not want an oven at all, and will be satisfied with a versatile combination microwave, perhaps augmented by an electric frying pan, jug kettle and toaster. The disadvantage of such a solution is that it may devalue the property for future owners.

Avoid sinks without drainers. Even the smallest draining area will help to contain water puddles on the worktop. Wall-hung wire plate racks, fixed above the sink or drainer, can increase the draining area without extending the worktop. Where there is space for a dishwasher, narrow models are available (see p. 135). For inexpensive cabinets, see p. 144.

## **Kitchen in a cupboard**

For the rock bottom priced kitchen, an ‘off the peg’ counter-top, available from DIY superstores, with a sink unit and open shelves above and below, will save the cost of cabinets but will be subject to grease and dust and look untidy.

There are bespoke ‘mini-kitchens’ prefabricated with various combinations, which are not cheap but worth studying for ideas. It will generally be cheaper and more desirable, but not quicker, to design a more client-specific combination instead. These can be concealed with sliding or folding doors, which could also form part of a storage wall where the depth of the cupboard is suitable for clothes-hanging space alongside.