

Designer Secrets

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EMILY TODHUNTER

Known for its elegant mix of Thirties glamour and contemporary, sleek lines, Emily Todhunter's interior design company, Todhunter Earle, is a leading light in the design world. Since launching in 1998, Emily has designed successful wallpaper and fabric collections for Paint Library and Designers Guild respectively, as well as her own collection of sophisticated crystal lighting

'It's so important to plan a space that fits your lifestyle'

THE SCHEME Emily's kitchen/dining room at her home in Pimlico, London. Was the room this big originally?

No. I knocked together a galley kitchen, opening off the hall, and an adjoining small sitting room. It's so important to plan a space that fits your lifestyle. I am a working mum and wanted to create a big kitchen/dining room so I could be centre-stage while cooking.

What prompted your choice of kitchen?

I chose a sleek Boffi kitchen (020 7228 6460; alternative-plans.co.uk) in walnut veneer. The wood finish was important – I wanted the island unit to look like a piece of furniture. The wall-mounted open shelf, where I keep most frequently used items, looks more relaxed than wall cupboards. You've cleverly teamed a modern kitchen and period furniture – what's the secret?

You can go either way with modern kitchen units, but as this is a family room, antique pieces helped to create a softer mood. When planning, it's always good to include pieces you already have. The odd new purchase will cleverly link different periods together. Here, the swifty modern bar stools and my own-design dining chairs make the connection.

Why did you choose parquet?

Parquet is warm and practical. Stone would have been too noisy, and carpet gets dirty so easily. This is a reclaimed French parquet

floor, but by sanding it down to a lighter finish, then varnishing to make it hard-wearing, I've given a new look to a traditional surface.

Have you deliberately played down soft furnishings?

At the three windows I've hung unlined, unbleached linen blinds. It's a very easy look to copy, just a rectangle of fabric, gently ruched with string. They blow gently in the breeze, and make you feel as if you're on a ship. Upholstery in a kitchen/dining room must be practical, so the banquette is upholstered in a brown hard-wearing Sahco Hesslein fabric (020 7352 6168; sahco-hesslein.com).

What's the trick to incorporating a sitting area in a family kitchen?

In this room the fireplace is at the opposite end to the kitchen. It's normal practice to group sofas around a fireplace, but I deliberately angled the L-shaped banquette to face towards the island unit, so if I'm cooking I'm not looking at someone's back.

How important is lighting?

It's vital. In a kitchen/dining room you must be able to alter the mood – from everyday to atmospheric for a grown-up dinner party. We have six different circuits in here, from chic spotlights under the shelves to low-level lamps and a pendant light above the dining table. Don't forget to add dimmers. *Todhunter Earle, First Floor, Chelsea Reach, 79-89 Lots Road, London SW10 0RN, 020 7349 9999, todhunterearle.com*



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EMILY'S FAVOURITE HAUNTS

BLANCHARDS ANTIQUES, 86-88 PIMLICO ROAD, LONDON SW1, 020 7823 6310, AND (WILTSHIRE BRANCH) FROXFIELD, NEAR MARLBOROUGH, WILTSHIRE, 01488 680666. 'FABULOUS DECORATIVE ANTIQUES.' L'ENCOIGNURE, 517 KING'S ROAD, LONDON SW10, 020 7351 6465, THOMASKERRANTIQUES.COM. 'TASTEFUL ANTIQUE FRENCH FURNITURE.'

VALERIE WADE, 108 FULHAM ROAD, LONDON SW3, 020 7225 1414, VALERIEWADE.COM. 'PRETTY ACCESSORISED LIKE LAMPS AND PHOTOGRAPH FRAMES.'

HILARY BATSTONE, 8 HOLBEIN PLACE, LONDON SW1, 020 7730 5335. 'LOVELY FRENCH THINGS, A VERY TASTE TO MY OWN.'

KNOWLES & CHRISTOU, 116 LOTS ROAD, LONDON SW10, 020 7352 7000. 'THEY STOCK THE EMILY TODHUNTER COLLECTION OF LAMPS.'