East Coast

American inspiration flows through Rachel and Glen Wardrop's beautiful bespoke kitchen

PICTURES DARREN CHUNG | WORDS RACHEL OGDEN

achel and Glen Wardrop's new kitchen might be situated in an Edwardian property in a pretty village on the Thames but its influences are anything but English. Tm a bit obsessed with everything East Coast,' admits Rachel. 'Over time, we've transformed the whole house to give it the look of living in the Hamptons, from the dark wood floors to making it feel more spacious.' However, the tired wooden kitchen that greeted the couple and their two-year-old son Alex when they moved into the house clashed with their vision. It was in a tiny extension, so disproportionally small to the size of the house. We wanted the kitchen to be the focal point and open-plan, so we decided we would knock down a wall to eat into the garage and utility room space, raising the height of the ceiling at the same time, to make one square room.' Velux windows added instant brightness but they still needed to choose the cabinetry. 'We visited a lot of high street brands but they weren't able to offer us anything that was truly bespoke, it was just what they had on the shelves. We wanted somebody to design us a bespoke, handmade kitchen,' Rachel explained. Armed with a moodboard consisting of everything from pictures from American magazines and websites to estate agents shots and stills of the kitchen in the movie Something's Gotta Give, the Wardrops went to visit Higham Furniture to see if it could design similar units. 'They encouraged us to visit them in their workshop to see what they did and we were really impressed, recalls Rachel. 'While I had pictures of kitchens, I'm not a designer, so I needed somebody to interpret them. We felt that Tim Higham and his designers understood what we wanted, could give us some ideas and not create a typical English look.' Taking Rachel's moodboard as a starting point, Tim designed a painted in-frame kitchen with deep cornicing, oversized cupboards, glass beading and a capacious island packed with drawers in increasing sizes. It almost looks like a dresser, laughs Rachel. I think that is quite different, because I have nine drawers and the handles become bigger as they continue down, so it's a nice feature.' The door furniture itself is a key part of the design, intended to be strikingly different from what would be usually found on a Shaker-style kitchen and consisting of cup handles, knobs and latches that were sent over from America by friends. 'I also wanted marble worktops everywhere,' explains Rachel. 'They're totally impractical but it's what they have in the US, as well as lots of stainless steel and big pendant lights for an industrial look.

Finished with the same model of range cooker that the couple had in their last home and a stainless steel splashback instead of tiles, the grand style is one that consistently elicits gasps of awe from visitors. 'A lot of people say, 'wow, I'd love to have a kitchen this size,' when they walk in,' reveals Rachel. 'I'm really happy with its size and proportions, plus it has a huge amount of storage. Everybody seems to congregate around the island and because there's no sink on it, I can use it to lay food out for parties. It's the hub of our house – serene, welcoming and delightful to spend time in.' *eKBB*



The Wardrops' kitchen inspired by the feature film Something's Gotta Give, is a very sociable one, demonstrated aptly by this inviting 'East Coast' style breakfast bar, complete with painted bar chairs and a generous worktop overhang

HANDLES

The door furniture is a very important part of the overall look of the room. A lot of it was sent over from America by friends















FURNISHINGS

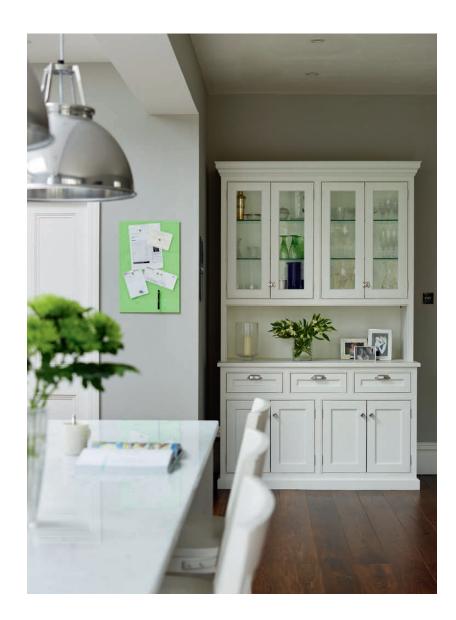
The steel grey and white fabric that has been used for the blind and curtains complements the colours of the furniture, the veins in the marble worktops and the walls. I love grey and as the room is south facing and flooded with light, I was finally able to have a grey room,' muses Rachel

WORKTOPS

'I had to have the marble surfaces,' explains Rachel. 'They weren't the cheapest but I was adamant that I wasn't going to have composite or a marble that was grey.' While sealed, marble can still be quite porous and prone to staining, so the couple are always sure to use trivets and chopping boards to protect it

PENDANT LIGHTS

pendants add an industrial feel, suitable to the East Coast look they were aiming to achieve, there are other clever hidden lighting solutions to add a practical element. 'We just run our hands along under the kitchen cabinets and the undercabinet lights come on because of a sensor,' says Rachel



Be open to searching far and wide online to find the pieces that are going to make the difference'



TIM HIGHAM, DIRECTOR AND OWNER, HIGHAM FURNITURE



What was your biggest challenge with this design?

We are seeing an increasing number of customers who have been on the Pinterest and Houzz websites. We had to try to understand what Rachel wanted from the images that she was working from, which was an American-influenced kitchen with striking details.

Were there any features you had to work around or be thoughtful of? Their ceilings were very high and Rachel and Glen wanted taller-than-usual units. The

to get the proportions right and not having the cabinets become too overbearing. Putting lit glazed units above the wall and tall cupboards provides the height but without the kitchen dominating visually.

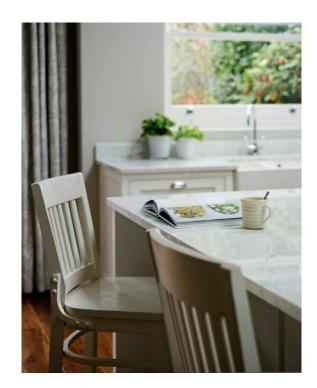
problem with this was trying

What do you think works really well in this design?

The wooden floor brings warmth into the room with light streaming through the light wells over the kitchen walkway, while the palecoloured cabinetry and stunning marble worktops

bounce the light around. Keeping the fridge-freezer on show instead of integrating it helps bring a sense of proportion to the space and the open shelf above is the perfect place to bring some colour into the design with an array of cookbooks. The finer details in this design really made it feel 'American', such as the frames on the drawers including the smaller top drawers on the drawer packs the cockbeading, the glass beading, the variation in handles and use of latches on the upper cupboards. They all contribute to the final look.





Kitchen profile

Framed Shaker-style tulipwood cabinetry painted in All White by Farrow & Ball with cockbeading on the frames, glazed satin-finish beaded doors and oversized cornicing. Beautifully veined Carrara marble worktops and dark timber floors help to evoke a sense of relaxed New England living while lashings of chrome and steel keep the look fresh and modern.

HIGHAM FURNITURE
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Tel 0800 047 0235. higham.co.uk
This Higham kitchen cost £38,050, including
delivery and installation, excluding handles





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