

# East Coast COOL

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

PICTURES DARREN CHUNG | WORDS RACHEL OGDEN

Rachel 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. 'I'm 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*

## BREAKFAST BAR

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







**OPEN-PLAN LIVING**

Roof windows flood the Wardrops' kitchen with plenty of daylight, making the most of its Carrara marble worktops, white painted cabinetry and metallic elements. Unexpected for Shaker-style furniture, this design boasts oversized cabinets with glazed panes at the top, which have a satin finish to diffuse the light. 'We don't actually use them for anything,' admits Rachel. 'They are purely for aesthetics because they are so high up.' The LG fridge-freezer has been sited away from the working area of the kitchen so that guests can help themselves to drinks. 'I would have loved a bigger model but we already had this one. What is important is that it's not magnetic so it can't be covered with lots of magnets and always looks pristine and lovely,' laughs Rachel.





**SOFT 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**

While the large chrome 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

problem with this was trying 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.

**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 pale-coloured 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.



**PULL-OUT DRAWERS**

Nine drawers constructed from maple in the island ensure that Rachel is never short of storage space. 'We use the top ones for our cutlery as well as my silverware, my linen and my tablecloths with the deeper drawers storing pots and pans,' she explains.

**FLOORING**

The solid wooden flooring has been given a dark stain to resemble real walnut but it is actually oak sourced from Ireland.





***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 corning. 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**

CW17, The Cranewell Building, The Old Gas Works, 2 Michael Road, Fulham, London, SW6 2AD.  
Tel 0800 047 0235. [higham.co.uk](http://higham.co.uk)  
This Higham kitchen cost £38,050, including delivery and installation, excluding handles



**MULTIFUNCTIONAL ISLAND**

Often used for laying out food for parties, the island mainly functions as a prep area, the working triangle existing along the L-shape of the wall cabinetry. From it, Rachel can enjoy views of her garden through the double doors or chat to friends at the dining table





**WET AREA**

A deep, double-bowl sink, complete with classic swan-necked tap, has been undermounted below the marble worktop, with an upstand to protect the wall from splashes. The window above was replaced as part of the renovations, the Wardrops choosing one that was more in keeping with the Edwardian style of the house. A Roman blind matches the curtains at the adjacent glass doors



## PROFESSIONAL-STYLE COOKING

Rachel loved her old Smeg range cooker so much, she bought exactly the same dual-fuel model for her new kitchen. Its stainless-steel finish and matching splashback and extractor hood echo the chrome handles and lighting, while its twin ovens make catering for a crowd easy

## Stockists

### APPLIANCES

1000mm A2-8 Opera dual-fuel **range cooker**, £2,000; KD100X-2 Opera chimney **extractor hood**, £800, both Smeg. Similar fully integrated **dishwasher**, S51E50X1GB, £529, Neff. GWL227YSQA freestanding American-style **fridge-freezer**, £1,300, LG

### FIXTURES AND FURNISHINGS

4460 Phoenician **monobloc mixer tap** in chrome, £230, Perrin & Rowe. 800mm Farmhouse undermounted double-bowl **Belfast ceramic sink**, £500, Villeroy & Boch. 30mm Blanco Carrara marble **worktops**, £3,000, Sabre Stone. 100cm stainless-steel **splashback**, £160, Smeg. 180mm wide Serenzo **engineered European oak planks** in Doppio Fumo Classico, from around £59.55m<sup>2</sup>, The Hardwood Floor Company. All White **Estate**

**eggshell**, £50 per 2.5 litres; Pavilion Gray **Estate emulsion**, £34.50 for 2.5 litres, both Farrow & Ball. Chrome cup **handles**, for similar try Large Shell Handle in chrome, £4.99 each, Homebase. Similar **knobs**, 30mm Cabinet Ball Knobs in chrome, £2.89 each; Similar **latches**, Fanlight cupboard catches in chrome, £7.25 each, all Catches & Latches. Titan Size 1 **pendant lights** in aluminium, £186 each, Original BTC. **Curtains** in Crystal Springs in Sterling from the Nautica collection by Robert Allen Home, £22.90 per m; **Blind** in Crystal Springs in Sterling from the Nautica collection by Robert Allen Home, £22.90 per m, both Jenny Blanc Interiors. Stratford **dining table** by Flamant, £1,900, Karavan. Similar **dining chairs**, Corodoba dark wood chairs in cream, £165 each, Coco Male. Tarnby flatwoven **rug**, £70, Ikea. **Bar chairs**, for similar try Suffolk barstools in Limestone, £250 each, Neptune.

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