

Simone and Keith's period-style base cabinetry has been finished in Lichen by Farrow & Ball for a cool, calming feel. Auckland Oak flooring from the Van Gogh range by Karndean provides a practical finish to the room and also complements the wooden worktops



SET THE SAGE

Muted green cabinetry creates a welcoming feel in Simone and Keith Wilkins's country-style kitchen

My advice... is to spend time thinking about what sort of handles will work best. Our designer said not to opt for something that looked inexpensive – after all, you wouldn't buy a cheap pair of shoes to go with an expensive designer dress'

SIMONE WILKINS

RIGHT Neatly stacked, the Le Vrai Gourmet pans from Debenhams fit snugly into a deep pull-out drawer; an idea Simone first saw when she stayed in a cottage in Norfolk

BELOW RIGHT The couple used their experience renovating a previous kitchen to help them design their new ergonomic scheme. 'It's very tempting to rip the cabinetry out immediately but then you don't have the chance to see how things would work better,' smiles Simone

FAR RIGHT Designer Nick has integrated the couple's fridge-freezer into a purpose-built housing to disguise its bulk. Rated A for energy efficiency, this model comes with a door alarm, a chilled water dispenser which the children love to use, and an ice maker. Above the appliance, there is ample room for Simone to store her collection of recipe books. The blind is made in a ticking fabric that was sourced from Ikea

The dual-fuel range cooker is framed by an overmantle, which is painted in Stone 3 from Paint & Paper Library, and cabinets that store oils and vinegar. For similar wall tiles, try Cracked Glaze Marble Arch from the Retro Metro range by Fired Earth

After spending months planning a kitchen refurbishment in their previous property, Simone Wilkins and her husband Keith knew exactly what they had to do when they were faced with a dark wood and cream-painted scheme in their new home, a Victorian semi-detached house. 'The kitchen was in pretty good order when we viewed the property five years ago although we could see it hadn't been touched by the previous owners,' explains Simone, who runs a greetings card business. 'However, after we moved in, we noticed that the units were not just very tired but there hadn't been much thought given to the layout.'

Taking inspiration from the scheme they had left behind in their previous home, Simone and Keith began to think about how they could improve the room in their new house. 'We decided to instruct our builder Adrian Mannion from Sherlock Building Contractors to remove the archway that led to the breakfast room to make extra space. We also chose to add more natural light by installing a set of French windows at the other end of the room, where the sink had previously stood, and blocked up the kitchen's door to the garden, which was taking up space along one wall,' explains Simone, mum to Ella, eight, and Sam, six.

Keen to replicate the hand-painted cabinetry of their previous kitchen, the couple decided to visit the showroom of local firm, Handmade Kitchen Co. There they were introduced to designer Nick Bridger and couldn't help but admire the beautiful painted scheme that he had on display. 'The furniture was exactly what

we wanted and it helped that Nick was so friendly and really listened to what we were saying,' remembers Keith, who is a private banker.

Nick paid the couple a visit to look at the space they had and was quick to offer advice. 'He explained to us that if we had a wooden floor, which is what we originally wanted, and somewhere sprung a leak, the boards would just absorb the water and the damage would spread very quickly. We chose a wood look-alike instead and you can't tell the difference,' says Simone. 'No one really tells you this sort of thing unless you ask, so he was a mine of information.'

Although Keith handles the majority of the cooking, Simone was eager to be as involved as possible with the planning of the room, especially because she wanted to prevent the galley-shaped kitchen from looking like a long corridor. To avoid this, Nick advised the couple to have their solid oak worktops cut to follow the contours of the cabinetry below and added an elegant overmantle to frame the smart dual-fuel range cooker, creating a further point of interest in the space.

The result is a beautiful, country-style kitchen painted in sage and cream by Mick Carter Decorators & Sons to mimic the surrounding garden. 'It is a cliché but our guests always congregate here if it's our turn for Sunday lunch or we're having friends over, even if all we do is watch Keith cook! I almost wish we hadn't wasted the money knocking down the wall between our formal dining room and the reception room, as we never really use them any more,' reveals Simone. **BK**



My favourite... design element of the kitchen is the larder.
It has really wide shelves that curve, so it can hold an awful lot!



Simone's traditional-style cupboards have been finished with stepped-edge corning at the top to enhance the period feel. The subtle pewter knob and cup handles were supplied by Handmade Kitchen Co. An expanse of worktop is perfect for making breakfast as it is opposite the fridge freezer and out of the way of the main working area

RIGHT Located at the end of a run of cabinetry, a large pantry cupboard boasts curved shelves and stainless-steel racks for Keith's many herbs and spices



DESIGN & CABINETS

- Nick Bridger at **Handmade Kitchen Co.**, 18A Woodfield Terrace, High Road, Thornwood, Epping, Essex CM16 6LL (01992 577998) www.handmadekitchen.co.uk
- Hand-painted, in-frame beaded tulipwood furniture with hand-painted MDF cabinetry

WORKTOPS

- 40mm solid oak. Price per linear m **£282**

SINK & TAP

- Classic 80 Butler double-bowl farmhouse sink, Villeroy & Boch **£420**
- 4193CPWPC Ionian two-hole monobloc mixer tap in chrome with deck-mounted porcelain levers, Perrin & Rowe **£290**

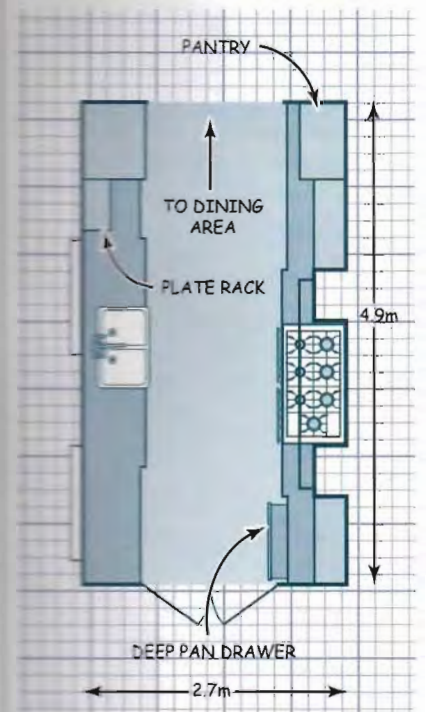
APPLIANCES (shown)

- Richmond dual-fuel range cooker, Stoves **£1,500**
- Canopy extractor hood, for similar try P78070, Britannia **£260**
- E402BRXFDU freestanding fridge freezer, Fisher & Paykel **£1,021**

APPLIANCES (not shown)

- Fully integrated dishwasher, Smeg **£587**
- Fully integrated washing machine, Hotpoint **£320**

For stockists, see page 143



GUIDE PRICE

- Cabinetry only **£8,000**