



BUDGET BRILLIANCE

INSPIRED BY THE OUTDOORS, THIS COLOUR-FILLED KITCHEN PROVES IT'S POSSIBLE TO CREATE A HIGH-CLASS LOOK ON A TIGHT BUDGET

WORDS **ISOBEL KING** PHOTOGRAPHS **AMANDA PRIOR** STYLING **RACHEL BROWN**



→ **BRIEF** The owners wanted this small kitchen to be the focal point of their two-bedroom Sydney unit; a junction between the adjoining living areas and the outdoors. They asked for bold colours, easy-to-clean surfaces and, above all, a concrete floor – all within a budget of \$13,000.

→ **CHALLENGES** The constraints of a small floor area and modest budget called for a few inventive solutions by architect Peter Farman (left) and his team at 4SITE Sydney. As the unit is on the

first floor, the request for a concrete slab was the biggest challenge. Balancing the competing demands of generous storage and sufficient bench space was another consideration.

→ **SOLUTION** To save on plumbing and wiring, the sink and appliances remain in their original positions. A fold-down benchtop provides optional space for entertaining. A sheet of compressed fibre cement was used instead of a concrete slab, providing a similar look for a fraction of the price. →



ARCHITECT'S TIP → "USE LATERAL THINKING TO COME UP WITH SOLUTIONS TO MEET THE BUDGET. THE 'FAUX' CONCRETE IS A CASE IN POINT"

SMARTEN UP STORAGE

As with any small kitchen, storage was both a priority and a challenge. The compact room soon seems cluttered if too many objects remain on the bench space, so Peter used flip-up top cupboards for tin and jar storage (and as a way to neatly conceal the rangehood), ending in a display shelf for cookbooks and candles. Below, a combination of large pot drawers and standard drawers flank the oven.

Clean lines are a very important feature of the kitchen and what looks like floor-to-ceiling storage along one wall is actually a concealed fridge and freezer, with storage on top and a large cupboard beside it.

"I made sure all the doors have been hinged to open back 180 degrees, providing much easier access," Peter explains.

Another feature is the way the benchtop seems to disappear into a void behind the white cabinetry, which is used as an appliance cupboard to keep benchtops clutter-free.

HITTING THE DECK

Peter's design embraces the small outside deck as an extension of the kitchen/dining zone, and the owners often dine alfresco to take advantage of their leafy outlook.

The cantilevered benchtop serves as a functional link between the two spaces, and the blue kitchen splashback that juts around the door serves as a visual one.

A one-metre-high sheet of laminated safety glass allows a clear view of the garden, while a pane of frosted glass provides privacy from the neighbouring unit across the stairs.

"There are no joins between the glass, just a 50mm gap – the glass sits in a steel groove below the deck," says Peter, highlighting the floating effect it creates. ✦

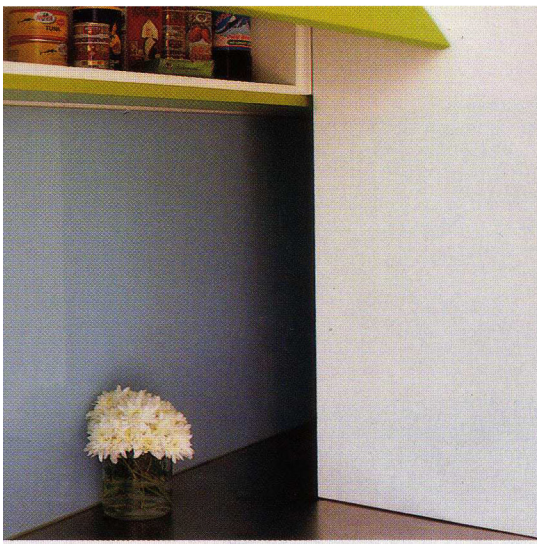
ARCHITECTS 4SITE Sydney and John Skennar Design. Call (02) 9519 2572 or 0414 581 419.

BUILDER Anthony O'Donovan Constructions. Call 0418 966 696.

(Opening page) Missoni Home water tumblers in Blue, \$47 each, Iittala **carafe** in Blue, \$148, all from Spence & Lyda nationally (02) 9212 6747, www.spenceandlyda.com.au. Blanda glass **bowl** in Blue, \$12, from Ikea (02) 9418 2744, www.ikea.com.au. Serving **tray**, \$14.95, from Barbeques Galore 13 12 54, www.barbequesgalore.com.au.

Balcony **balustrade** in 12mm toughened glass, \$2000, by Towner Bros (02) 9757 3144. Stainless steel **benchtop**, POA, custom-made by LC Stainless Solutions (02) 4226 5500. **Cabinetry** in Dulux semi-gloss Wicked Green polyurethane, \$100-150 per sqm, by Square Peg Woodworks 0415 628 606. **Veneer** in Milano Walnut 588, approx \$200 per sqm, from Laminex 13 21 36, www.laminex.com.au. Vintage **coloured-glass bottles** (approx \$175 for large, and from \$35 for small), from I.D (02) 9331 3380. Medium porcelain **latte beakers**, \$29.95 each, from Mud Australia, (02) 9699 7600, www.mudaustralia.com. Erik & Ester 34cm **cone candles**, \$10.15 each; Sambonet 'Spot' stainless-steel 20cm **stockpot**, \$265, and 'Spot' 12cm **milk boiler**, \$210, all from Spence & Lyda (02) 9212 6747, www.spenceandlyda.com.au. **Glass splashback** in Dulux Sky Chase, approx \$400 per sqm, from Towner Bros (02) 9757 3144. Compressed **fibre-cement floor**, approx \$80 per sqm, from Bunnings Warehouse (02) 8788 2000; finished in Estapol High Gloss **Floor Finish**, \$68 per 4L, by WattyL 13 21 01, www.wattyl.com.au.





CONNECT WITH COLOUR

The owners were keen to experiment with colours rather than stick to a safe monochromatic scheme, so Peter took his cue from nature, which also reinforced the connection with outside. The bright-green cabinetry mimics the colour of a robinia tree; the deep brown is reminiscent of tree bark; and the blue splashback evokes the sky.

“When people are seated in the adjoining dining area and looking directly into the kitchen, the palette of colours is almost like an artwork,” says Peter, pointing out a detail that reinforces the subtle artistry of the design. The brown and green hues running left to right on the top cabinetry are reversed on the bottom, with an invisible vertical line dividing the two colours.

USE A BOLD SPLASHBACK

“The blue picks up on the colour of the sky and you can see daylight reflected in the glass,” says Peter, explaining the dual purpose

of the vivid blue splashback in the kitchen, which snakes around the door to meet the outside deck. “It was another way of connecting the indoor and outdoor spaces.”

Made of 6mm toughened glass, the splashback also meets the owners’ requirement for a seamless, easy-clean surface. Rather than restricting it to the conventional wet areas and cooking zone, Peter decided to run it along the exposed walls so there would be no jarring breaks or joins to clutter the small space.

CONCRETE EVIDENCE

The owners’ preference for a polished concrete floor proved one of the biggest challenges of the job, mainly because the unit is not on the ground floor.

Pouring a concrete slab would have been both technically difficult and rather expensive. Peter claims his solution was the greatest personal triumph of the job – and one he has since replicated on other projects.

He had the floorboards removed and simply laid a sheet of 16mm fibre cement directly onto the floor joists, finishing it with a clear coat of sealer. “You can hardly tell it isn’t a concrete floor, yet the difference in cost is huge – probably about \$5000 for the real thing, as opposed to the \$200 I spent on the fibre-cement sheet.”

STYLISH STAINLESS STEEL

The L-shaped benchtop is fashioned from a single piece of stainless steel, with the double sink moulded into the steel.

“Rather than a ribbed draining board, which would have broken up the clean lines, we decided to slant the stainless steel towards the sink at one end so it can still be used as a benchtop,” Peter explains.

As the owners like to entertain, he extended the benchtop with a cantilevered stretch of stainless steel. Its sturdy hinges make it strong enough to sit on and it can be folded down when not in use.