



PHOTO: JONATHAN GOOCH

# HEART of the HOME

Berkhamsted-based *Claire Garner Interiors* share their kitchen design expertise

It is through gaining a deep understanding of the lifestyles of their clients that Claire Garner Interiors are able to craft spaces which are not only functional, but also balance traditional rustic charm with a refreshing atmosphere. Absolutely Hertfordshire delves into the expertise of founder Claire Garner to uncover the intricate process behind designing the perfect country kitchen space.

"At Claire Garner Interiors, we pride ourselves on offering a warm and personalised approach to every client, delivering elevated and tailored designs," says Claire. "When approaching a kitchen design specifically, my focus is on achieving a harmonious balance between functionality, style, and practicality. Our goal is always to transform kitchens into spaces that reflect the individuality and lifestyle of each client."





## FUNCTIONALITY AND STYLE

At Claire Garner Interiors, the design process begins with a thorough understanding of each client's lifestyle and needs. "Kitchen islands often play a crucial role in our designs," Claire comments. "They serve as multifunctional hubs for food preparation, hosting, and casual dining. We aim to keep kitchen islands minimal to maximise surface area, providing additional social seating and allowing for easy multitasking while cooking."

## THE WORK TRIANGLE

Efficiency is key in every kitchen layout that Claire and her team design. "I prioritise efficiency by organising key components like the sink, stove, and fridge in a triangular arrangement, known as the work triangle," explains Claire. "This configuration ensures a smooth workflow and easy access to essential areas during meal preparation."

## NATURAL MATERIALS FOR A RUSTIC FEEL

Claire Garner Interiors loves to use her natural materials, creating traditional and rustic spaces with a clean, open ambience. "Incorporating natural materials is key to achieving a rustic charm in kitchen design," explains Claire. "Wood plays a pivotal role, whether it's used for cabinetry, shelving, or kitchen accessories as its rich textures and warm tones infuse the space with a sense of history and authenticity. To further enhance the rustic ambience, we frequently integrate other natural elements such as stone surfaces for worktops or flooring, and brass hardware."



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## ARCHITECTURAL DETAILS

Careful planning of architectural details is essential to optimise both the design and functionality of the kitchen. As Claire explains: "Alcoves and nooks are creatively utilised for additional storage or cosy seating areas, ensuring every inch of space is maximised effectively. When possible, I enjoy integrating open shelving to elegantly showcase beautiful crockery or pantry items, blending practicality with charm." Additionally, farmhouse sinks with their deep basins and distinctive apron fronts not only accentuate the kitchen's rustic appeal, but also offer generous space for washing large pots and pans.

## CREATING A COHESIVE DESIGN

"The use of neutral colour palettes is instrumental in maintaining a light, fresh ambience," Claire explains. "Shades like white, beige, and soft pastels allow natural materials to shine, simultaneously making spaces feel more expansive and inviting. Also, remember to add little design touches of greenery, through indoor plants or a kitchen herb garden, which will bring life and vibrancy to the kitchen design."

"Lighting plays a crucial role in creating charm"

## LIGHTING THE WAY

"Lighting plays a crucial role in achieving the desired rustic charm," continues Claire. "Metal or glass pendant lights and stylish wall fixtures provide perfect illumination, complementing natural materials and overall design aesthetics. The right lighting can transform a space, making it feel both functional and inviting."

Layered lighting is essential in creating a versatile and welcoming kitchen space. "By combining ambient, task, and accent lighting, you can enhance both the functionality and atmosphere of the kitchen," Claire explains. "Ambient lighting, such as ceiling fixtures or recessed lights, sets the overall tone of the room, providing general illumination. Task lighting, including under-cabinet lights and pendant lights over workspaces, ensures that specific areas are well-lit for cooking and food preparation. Accent lighting, such as spotlights or LED strips, can highlight architectural details, artwork, or decorative elements."

"Incorporating dimmable lighting options allows for flexibility," Claire adds. "Being able to adjust the brightness according to different activities and moods is crucial. Brighter lighting is ideal for meal preparation, while softer, warmer lighting creates a cosy atmosphere for dining or entertaining."

"Don't forget about the importance of natural light," Claire emphasises. "Maximising the use of windows and skylights can bring in plenty of natural daylight, enhancing the rustic feel and making the space feel more open and airy. Natural light not only improves the ambience, but also has a positive impact on our well-being." 🌿

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