

BLANK CANVAS

Building a new kitchen from scratch wasn't the Ratcliffes' problem, but agreeing on the style was!

Kitchen file

Owners
Jonathan and Julia Ratcliffe and daughter Beth, 5

Property
Architect-designed loft in converted school, south London

Design
Kitchen Clinic, 149 St Johns Hill, London SW11 (0171 924 7877) and Granit Architects (0171 228 2246)

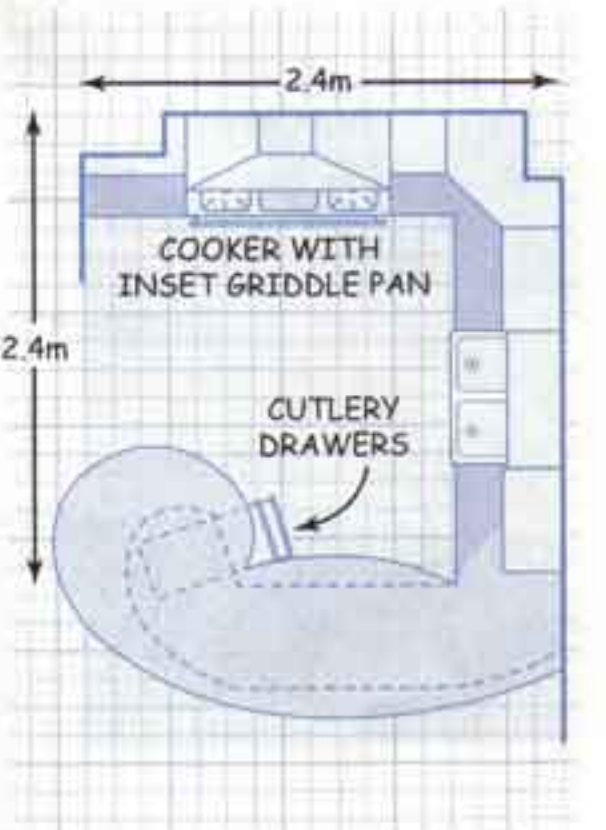
Details

Worksurfaces
30mm Bon Accord granite, £280 per linear m; 40mm solid maple, £234 per linear m, both from Kitchen Clinic

Flooring
Havwood's American oak, £36.95 per linear m

Appliances
Neff H5453WH microwave oven £277.30; Rosieres Rustic Double Bocusse cooker £1551, Typhoon Chimhood 120SS £639.20

Sink and taps
Villeroy & Boch Double Farmhouse sink £249.10; Franke Triflow Tradition tap £352.50



Price guide

£18,000



When childhood sweethearts Jonathan and Julia Ratcliffe finally tied the knot, they had ambitious plans for their first home, a loft in a converted Victorian school in south London. The apartment, just a shell when they bought it in 1997, had enormous potential. Local architects Granit came up with the idea of an open-plan living area with double height ceiling and exposed brick walls, linked to the upstairs levels by a steel spiral staircase. As the kitchen adjoins the main living area, it therefore needed to fit in with the curvy design, so the Ratcliffes enlisted the help of the Kitchen Clinic to draw up the final kitchen design. 'Because we wanted a fairly unusual kitchen, we couldn't buy a ready-made one – we needed one built to our own specifications,' explains Julia. 'The only problem was that our tastes are completely different. I was after a Shaker look, whereas Jon envisaged a contemporary stainless steel design.' So it was a challenge for designer Marcus Hartog to strike a balance that would please both Jon, a derivatives trader in the City, and Julia, a farmer's daughter from the Cotswolds.

One of the most striking elements of the finished kitchen is the Rosieres cooker. 'Jon insisted on this cooker, but he didn't buy it for cooking, purely for its looks. We have a very traditional relationship in the kitchen – I cook and he eats!'

Julia's requirements were more practical – 'Storage, storage and more storage! When we got married, we were given lots of wonderful wedding presents, so it was vital that the kitchen design incorporated plenty of cupboard space.' All the MDF cabinet doors were

1 The curved breakfast bar was hewn from a single length of maple, and proved to be a bit of a problem when the builders tried to get it into the apartment! Julia's brief was for plenty of storage, so the kitchen incorporates drawers cleverly set into the supporting leg of the breakfast bar, and a hidden cupboard on the far side

2 Julia and daughter Beth, five, plan the evening meal. The kitchen is a successful combination of styles – traditional to suit Julia's taste and contemporary to suit Jon's

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1 painted in cream, and finished with pewter knobs. To prevent the look becoming too traditional, stainless steel panels were fitted to the plinths under the units.

The focal point of the kitchen is the curvy breakfast bar, designed to echo the shape of the mezzanine above. A separate fridge and freezer proved practical as they slot neatly under the breakfast bar. With the exception of the microwave, most of the appliances are concealed.

Julia particularly likes the cutlery drawers set into the stainless steel leg supporting the breakfast bar, and the secret cupboard concealed behind a stainless steel panel on the opposite side of the bar. ‘I had no idea that cupboard was there, so I was delighted to discover it about three months after we moved in!’ she laughs.

Jonathan and Julia are thrilled with their kitchen. ‘It’s everything we wanted – easy to work in and practically designed,’ says Julia. ‘I think we’re incredibly fortunate to have such a fantastic kitchen in our first home. What a great way to start married life!’

FEATURE DOROTHY FALLON PHOTOGRAPHY DAVID STILL

1 The walls are covered with handpainted ceramic tiles, around £129.30 per sq m, from Fired Earth

2 & 3 The massive Rosieres cooker is a striking feature in the kitchen and incorporates an inset griddle which Julia finds particularly useful; the feature is a healthy way of cooking meat, allowing the fats to drain away. The MDF kitchen cabinets were handpainted by Lustr Interior Finishes with two coats of Lustr Cream and given an acrylic glaze topcoat, Stone. The finish was then varnished with two coats of an acrylic varnish



In Focus

TILE STYLE

Tiles are not only decorative – they’re functional too, and the good news is there’s a design to suit any kitchen...



1 These delicate **Ghost** tiles are part of the new Shadows range, that have subtle traces of metallic paint in the glazed flower illustrations. Around £138 per sq m, Fired Earth

2 This striking **encaustic tile panel** is one of a number of panel designs from The Life Enhancing Tile Company. Measuring 150mm, the panel costs around £25

3 For a dash of contemporary colour, try the **Geometrics** range from Kenneth Clarke Ceramics. Produced using a handprinted and sprayed technique to create vibrant colours, £2.06 each

4 Create a Spanish mood with these **Seville** tiles, suitable for floors as well as walls. £200 per sq m, Paris Ceramics

5 Brighten up a farmhouse scheme with these handmade **vegetable tiles** from Marlborough Tiles. There are 10 different designs to choose from, £6.09 each

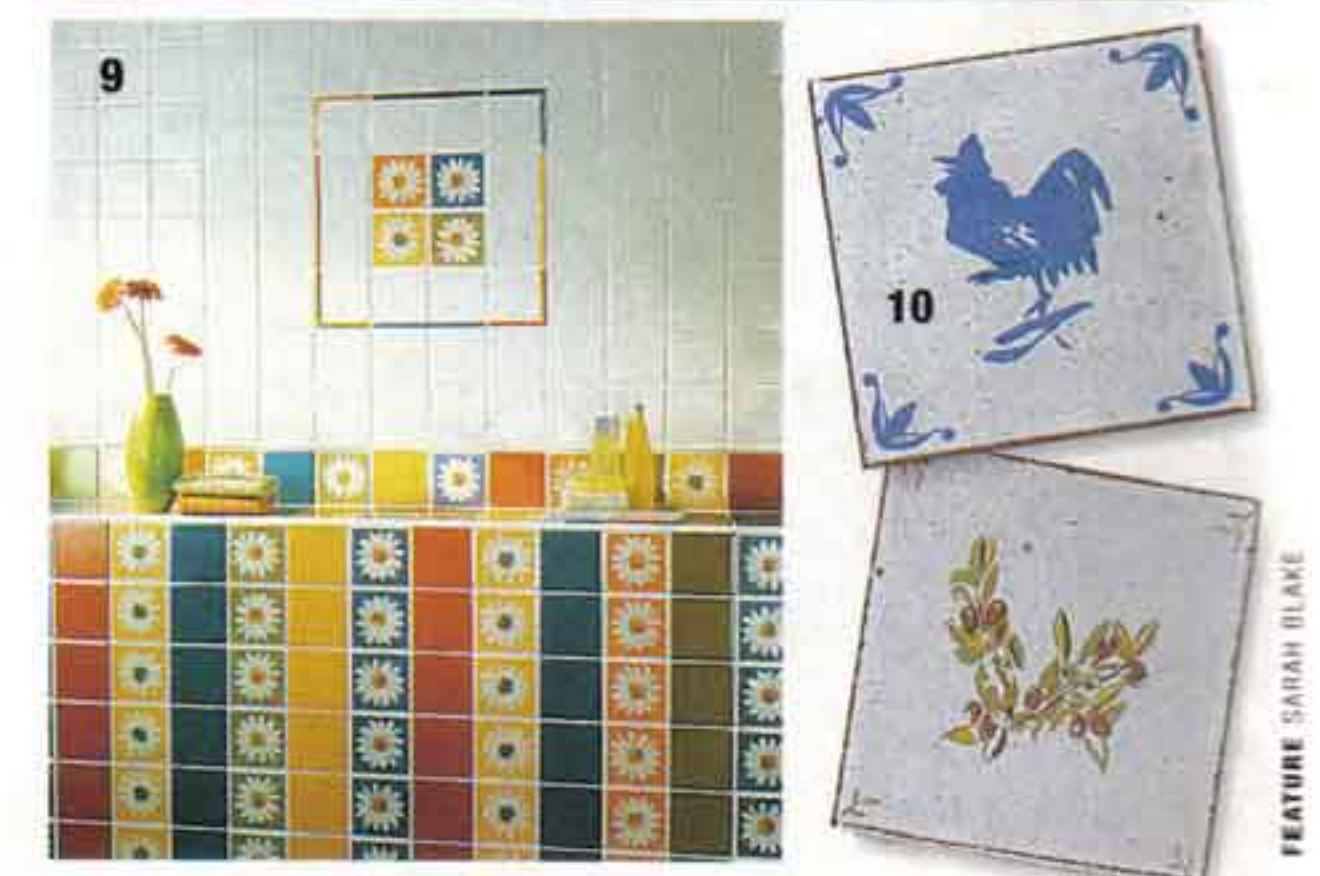
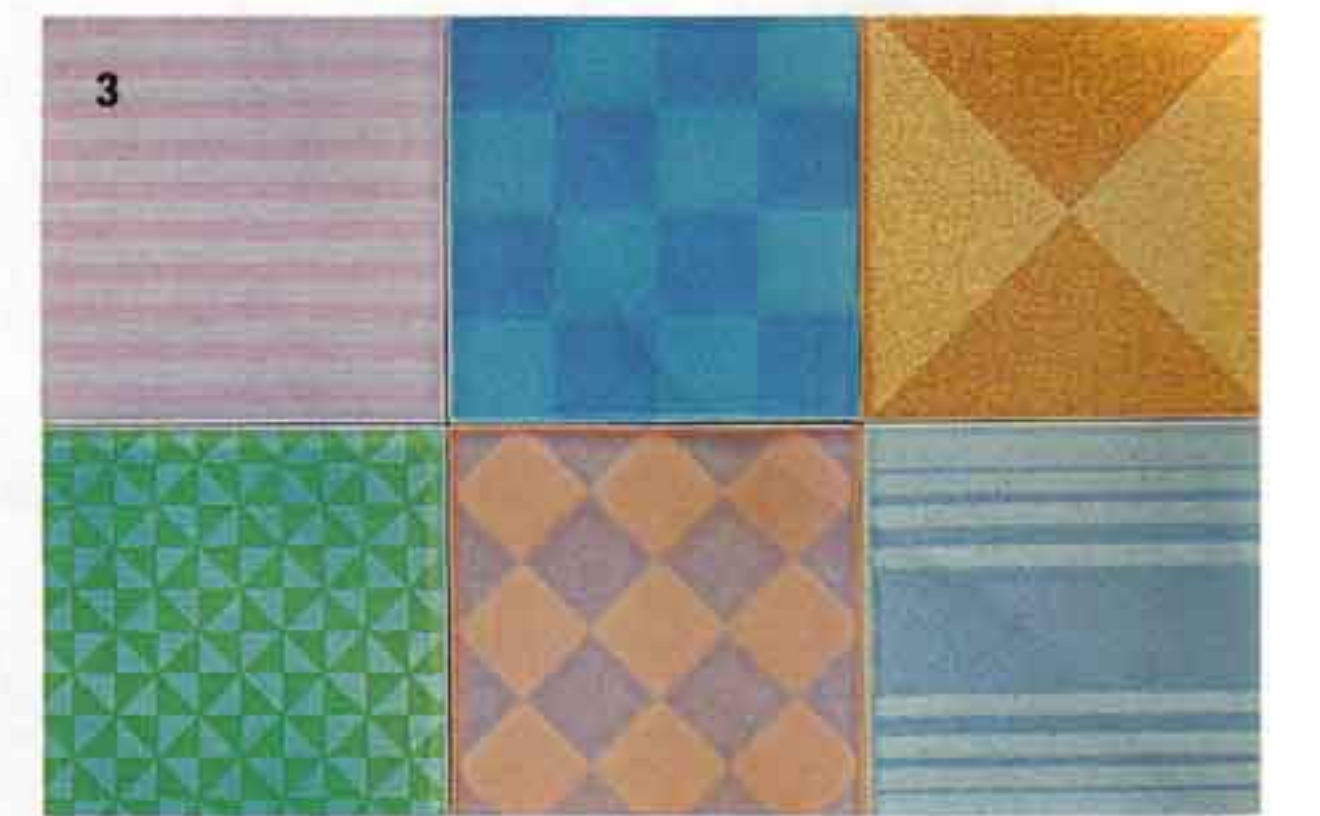
6 Create a pewter finish on your walls with these metallic **Space** tiles, £4.11 each, Fired Earth

7 **Rubber tiles** make a warm and practical alternative to traditional ceramic and can also help to insulate your walls. They should be professionally installed and sprayed with a silicone polish to protect them, after which they can be easily wiped clean. They are available in almost any colour at £41 per sq m, Dalsouple

8 The **Metalworks** range of tiles from Decorum is the perfect complement to a modern, minimalist kitchen. These nickel and bronze-faced tiles cost from £6.95 each

9 Linda Beard has designed this floral range of **Aster** tiles, which are available in four zesty colours. £6.79 for a pack of eight, H&R Johnson

10 Go rustic with the **Aragon** range of tiles, part of the Metropolitan Collection. From 82p each, Stonell



FEATURE SARAH BLAKE



DESIGNED FOR LIFE

Attention to detail, innovative design, plus the use of the finest materials, make a Smallbone kitchen a pleasure to work, rest and play in

Kitchen file

Viewing

Discover the beauty of Smallbone handmade kitchens at one of the showrooms listed below

Showrooms
London, 0171 581 9989
Tunbridge Wells, 01892 545918
Leamington Spa, 01926 833451
Harrogate, 01423 529222
Devizes, 01380 729090
St Albans, 01727 862677
Edinburgh 0131 220 6460

Brochure

For a free brochure, call
0171 589 5998

Details

Shown left is the Metropolitan kitchen by Smallbone, featuring unique serpentine drawers, scalloped handles and teak hinges available in maple or in a handpainted finish. The maple cabinets have centre panels veneered with precious masur birch

Price guide

£15,000

The starting price of
Smallbone kitchens

The kitchen is today's living room. Once a cramped room for the sole purpose of cooking and washing, people now have their meals in the kitchen, entertain in it, relax in it, work in it – all the things you do in a family room. At the same time, interest in creative cookery and different cuisines is flowering as never before, while a battery of modern appliances has taken the hard work out of grating, whisking, beating and dealing with the washing-up.

Changing role of the kitchen

The way we use our kitchens obviously affects how we want it designed and trends in interior design and technological innovations will help decide our choice. Smallbone has always been at the forefront of kitchen design and because the company offers a bespoke service, it is able to respond to clients' requests by introducing innovative ranges of furniture and accessories that have been extensively copied – like the ubiquitous willow basket, for example.

Smallbone was the first to make solid wood kitchens (a reaction against all that Sixties Melamine), from reclaimed pine. 'One of the pieces was a dresser with a cubbyhole for the dog,' remembers

Karon Read, senior designer and marketing manager at Smallbone.

Painted kitchens are now a kitchen design standard, but you saw them first at Smallbone. 'The painted kitchen was introduced in the early Eighties, coinciding with the revival of interest in paint effects' says Karon. 'And the free-standing kitchen was introduced in 1989.'

These days Smallbone craftsmen make sophisticated use of the finest woods like sycamore, olive ash and masur birch. Painted kitchens are still popular. The choice of colour is virtually limitless and each painted kitchen is hand finished by a decorative artist once it is installed.

'When a kitchen is ordered, we have detailed discussions with clients on how they will use it and make suggestions,' says Karon. 'We have become lifestyle experts. We've been asked for pull-out magazine racks, CD holders and, increasingly, a small desk area for the computer, with drawers for pens.' (See overleaf for a selection of design innovations offered by Smallbone.) 'We can make whatever clients request, within reason,' Karon continues, 'and of course those designs can easily be customised for other kitchens, should people ask.' ▶

SMALLBONE
of DEVIZES