





Clean lines and an eye-catching central island make this family kitchen, housed in a converted barn, anything but traditional

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Photography: **Mia Lind and Kajsa Kax**

Left: Timeless and durable, natural limestone flooring is a good-looking choice for a hard-working kitchen and the ideal backdrop for the island.

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onverting a barn into a practical, stylish family home can be a steep learning curve for those brave enough to take on the challenge. However, Ben and Georgie Chivers weren't particularly fazed by the prospect, as they had done it all before 15 years ago. They had since lived in several properties but realised that a redundant barn on their Cambridgeshire farm would make the ideal family home.

The couple worked closely on the plans with Graham Handley Architects of St Ives, with building work taking 14 months. The result is a 4000sq ft, six-bedroom house with plenty of space for them, their four children and two dogs. The barn is L-shaped and the kitchen sits at the junction where a single-storey wing meets the main structure. It overlooks a patio and lawn, which are accessed via a run of bi-fold doors, and, with its fuss-free design and hot pink central island, is a far cry from a typical country-style kitchen.

"We were after a nice, clean kitchen design and wanted to get away from the farmhouse look," says Ben. "There are reminders of the building's heritage, though, with some timbers in the oak frame left on show and one wall is exposed brick." After extensive research online, Ben and Georgie came across Sola Kitchens in a magazine, and visited the company's design centre in London where they met with designer Rhiannon Phenis. "Our brief to Rhiannon was a working family kitchen with simple lines. And we wanted an island where we could sit down and eat, not just lean against," Ben adds.

The new kitchen meets the brief exactly. Painted wood base units incorporating plenty of ▶

Right: Beams on the walls above the cooker and next to the windows have been left exposed as a reminder of the building's past. The oak for the breakfast bar was chosen to match.

storage extend along two walls, with a sink and integrated fridge and dishwasher housed on one side and a range cooker in the middle of the other. The dining table seats eight, and a window seat has been slotted in at the end of the run of units. To prevent the room looking closed in, Ben and Georgie decided against fitting any wall units, apart from a single full-height cupboard tucked into the corner.

Despite the hot-pink island being a very bold colour choice, it doesn't dominate the room and contrasts beautifully with the smooth grey limestone floor. "We didn't want the scheme to appear heavy in any way, so we had the island raised on legs to create the feeling of space underneath," says Ben. "And we chose pink to add a vibrant splash of colour, as everything else is neutral. It looks great but can easily be repainted if we ever get tired of it." This shade is also picked out in the glass splashback over the range cooker, and in the cushions on the window seat.

Downlighters set into the ceiling are complemented by two different styles of pendant over the island and dining table, which draw the eyes upwards and add visual interest as well as creating the right ambience. "We were lucky to have a wonderful electrician who works on the farm, and he cut the spotlights into the plaster so that they're flush with the ceiling," says Ben. "There are also spotlights over the cooker so it's not cast into shadow."

The couple, unsurprisingly, are delighted with the kitchen. "We're very pleased with it – it's got plenty of space, flows well and the island works a treat. This time our barn's for keeps," says Ben. **[KBB]**







Q&A

Owner Ben Chivers says...

What did you find the most useful research tools when starting this project?

We had experience of our previous barn conversion to draw on, although the internet also proved to be invaluable as you can find everything there.

What advice do you have for someone embarking on a similar project?

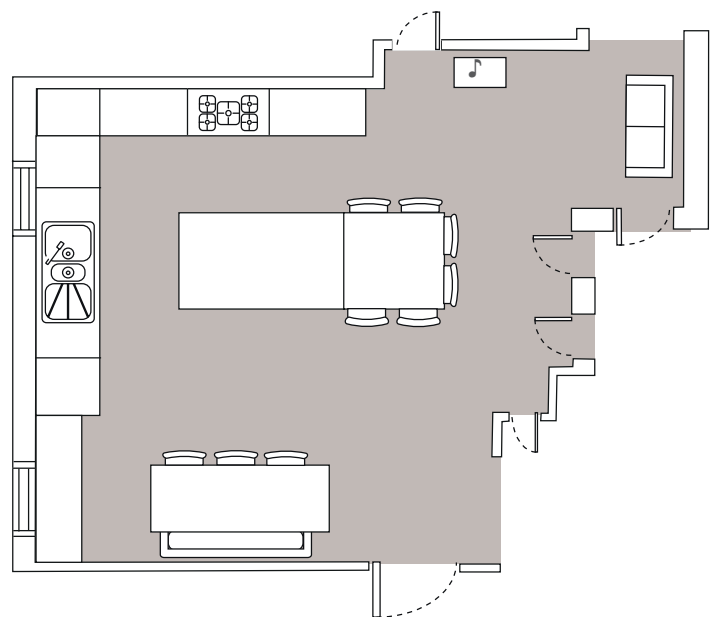
Spend time researching what you want, meet the people you may be working with, look at all your options, and you'll know when you've found what's right. And be heavily involved with the design process.

What was the biggest expense?

The kitchen units and the bi-fold doors, but they were well worth it.

Is there anywhere you managed to save money?

We'd had the dining chairs for years and painted them ourselves, so they cost next to nothing.





Left: To keep the overall look streamlined, Ben and Georgie decided against fitting the sink or hob into the island. However, it does include discreet pop-up electric sockets.

Above: Royal blue barstools are the perfect foil for the colourful island, which was designed so that there's room for the whole family to sit and eat together.

Below: "We chose oak for the eating area of the island to add warmth and break up the large expanse of quartz worktop," explains Ben.



SourceBook

DESIGN

Kitchen Rhiannon Phenis of Sola Kitchens (020 3004 0898 or www.solakitchens.com)

Architect Graham Handley Architects (01480 495660 or www.gharchitects.com)

KITCHEN

Cabinetry Frillan with solid ash doors, hand-painted in Truffle by Eicó (www.eico.co.uk) and island in Leather by Little Greene (www.littlegreene.com), Sola Kitchens, as before

Worktops Unistone Bianco Cristal quartz and natural oiled solid oak, Sola Kitchens, as before

Splashback Painted clear glass, Cambridge Glass (01223 902203 or www.cambridgeglassandglazing.co.uk)

Appliances Range cooker and extractor hood, Falcon (www.falconappliances.com); Fridge, dishwasher and warming drawer, Bosch (www.bosch-home.co.uk), all supplied by Sola Kitchens, as before

Sink Franke (www.franke.com), supplied by Sola Kitchens, as before

Taps Boiling-water tap, Quooker (www.quooker.co.uk), supplied by Sola Kitchens, as before; Mixer tap, Howdens (01223 247238 or www.howdens.com)

Flooring Limestone from Quorn Stone (01509 416557 or www.quornstone.com)

Barstools For similar try Simply Bar Stools (0117 330 2277 or www.simplybarstools.co.uk)

Dining table John Lewis (0345 604 9049 or www.johnlewis.com)

Dining chairs For similar try John Lewis, as before

Pew Aberford Interiors (0113 281 3209 or www.aberfordinteriors.co.uk)

Lights Lighting Sensations (01223 874434 or www.lightingsensations.co.uk)

COST

A similar kitchen would cost around £40,000



Above: The top of the window seat, built into an alcove, lifts up on hinges to reveal yet more storage space underneath.

of storage and easy access to plates, pans and utensils.

Below left: Double-drawer cabinets measuring 2m-wide on the cooker-facing side of the island provide plenty

Below right: The '50s-style jukebox – which Ben bought as a present for Georgie when their third child was born – injects a sense of fun into the room.





When the weather's warm the kitchen becomes part of the garden thanks to bi-fold doors that slide back to reveal a completely open corner.