

17 DESIGNS later

You may think creating a new scheme is easy if you own a kitchen company – but with so much inspiration, the opposite is often true

Words: **Georgina Townshend** Photography: **Chris Snook**

It's been so embarrassing the last few years; everyone assumed I had the most amazing kitchen at home – but it was actually old and battered, with high-street cabinets that should have been changed more than 10 years ago," laughs Sola Bune Strandh, chief executive officer and founder of Sola Kitchens. "I just couldn't make up my mind. The stick I got from my colleagues – it was ridiculous."

Having lived in her Victorian two-bedroom terraced ground-floor flat in Clapham for 13 years, when Sola and her husband, Anders Strandh, moved in they intended to extend by 7m, but were only granted permission for a 3m design by the planning authority. "Because of this, we decided to keep the kitchen in its original position in the middle of the property and make the extension more of a living-dining area. The works happened half a decade ago, and soon after I started to plan the kitchen – but, being my own worst client, it took years," she reminisces. As it happened, Sola went on to design 17 different versions of the space. "I had so many layout ideas and as time went on everything else became more important than my own kitchen."

During the first lockdown in 2020, a production slot for a client had to be postponed and Sola grasped the opportunity. "I spent the weekend finalising drawings and ordering everything; I knew it was now or never to actually get things moving." However, things still weren't simple. In fact, part of the front wall of the house had to come down to fit in a large Gaggenau fridge-freezer before anything else could be installed. "I only told my husband after it was done – he would have completely freaked out otherwise," Sola laughs.

For the layout, it was a juggling act of trying to place everything in the compact corridor-like room. "I wanted to have more things than I could actually fit, so had to make some serious decisions on what I could sacrifice," explains Sola. Base cabinetry runs along one side of the L-shaped area, with both open shelving and wall units above for extra storage. To keep a feeling of space, Sola included a glass-fronted dresser for crockery and glassware. While tall units have been placed on the hob run and on the wall opposite. "One of these has >





COVER
HOME

The FACTS

Who? Sofia Bune Strandh and Anders Strandh with Smilla the dog

What? A new kitchen in a Victorian two-bedroom ground-floor flat

Where? Clapham, London

Cost? Sola Kitchens start from £40,000

Time? Eight months

The awkwardly shaped room meant Sofia had to make a few sacrifices, since she couldn't fit everything she wanted into the layout.

Kitchen, Sola Kitchens.

the boiler in, which couldn't be moved. Then I really wanted an integrated drying cabinet – it was a must-have,” she says. “It looks like a fridge and you hang your wet clothes in there to dry. You can't really fit a tumble dryer into these types of properties, and it's so annoying to have the laundry hanging around, especially in the winter – this sorted that issue.” However, the new appliance took up a lot of space, so Sofia only had enough room for a half-sized larder and one oven, both of which now share a unit. “I would have loved a full cupboard, but it wasn't possible. It was my main sacrifice. Instead, I included pull-out storage near the hob for my spices, oils, and condiments, so I can have everything for cooking there, and the larder is more for items like flour and pasta.” Sofia also opted for a Bora hob with recirculating extraction built in, as there was no other way of getting ventilation in the space, and the dishwasher has been tactically placed near the sink and dresser.

Choosing the colour palette was incredibly hard for Sofia. “It was probably the most difficult decision,” she admits. “I've always loved pink and from the beginning I wanted a kitchen in the shade – then thought maybe I needed to be more sensible. After looking at around 20 different blues, greys, and greens with my friend, interior designer Jessica Coyle, she came over and told me: ‘forget those, we're doing it pink!’” she remembers. “So, I got my wish in the end. My husband isn't mad about the colour, but it's hand painted, so it can be changed after a year if he still hates it – although I think he's getting used to it,” she grins.

On reflection, with so many different designs and ideas, when asked whether she's happy with the final result, Sofia says: “It's made a huge difference to how we use the space. I love the colour; I love the look. I'm one happy client.” >



Sofia with her dog Smilla. **Paint**, Little Greene.



The tall unit to the left houses the Gaggenau **fridge-freezer**, while the right includes the boiler, Peko **drying cabinet**, half larder, and oven.

The kitchen is in the middle of the property. If you walk through, you get to the living-dining area, which sits in a rear extension the couple built a few year ago. **Handles**, Joseph Giles.



SOURCEBOOK

Kitchen Sola Kitchens 020 3004 0898 solakitchens.com

Interior design Jessica Coyle Design 0755 4250831 jessicacoyledesign.com

Appliances Hob, Bora, bora.com; Fridge-freezer, oven, Gaggenau gaggenau.com/gb

Tap Quooker 0345 833 3555 quooker.co.uk

Flooring Natural Angle naturalangle.co.uk

Worktop Sola Kitchens, as before

Paint Little Greene 0845 880 5855 littlegreene.com

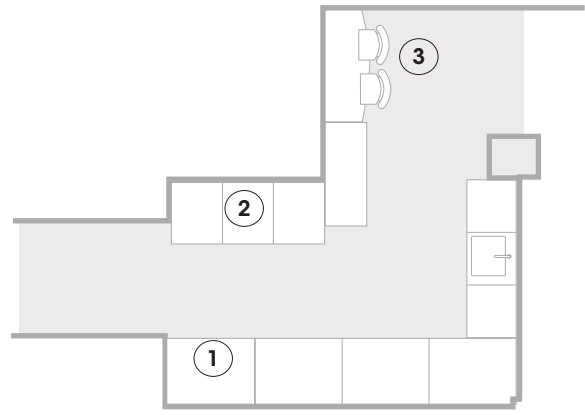
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"The sink is solid brass," says Sofia. "It was made for a display kitchen a few years ago, and has been hanging around in storage. I'd forgotten about it, but it's perfect."

Tap, Quooker; **sink**, for similar, try Lusso Stone.

The freestanding **dresser**, from Sola Kitchens, has glass fronted doors to help keep the space feeling light and open. **Flooring**, Natural Angle.



The PLANS

Sofia has transformed her kitchen from an uninspiring white galley layout, which didn't make the best use of space, into a beautiful and practical design.

1 Fridge-freezer The appliance was so large that part of the front of the building had to be taken down to get it in. It has been integrated behind the pink cabinetry.

2 Storage A dresser helps make the kitchen feel less cramped while providing a place for crockery, cutlery and glassware – plus it sits directly opposite the dishwasher.

3 Seating A breakfast bar offers a place for everyday bits and bobs and provides somewhere for guests to sit while chatting to the chef. >

SMALL SPACE IDEA

Glass-fronted cabinets help keep the room feeling light and spacious



The property's former owners added a side return-extension, which now houses the breakfast area. **Barstools**, Gad.



Jessica Coyle, Sofia's interior designer friend, suggested the breakfast bar as the kitchen has no space to put something like bags or papers. **Wall light**, Ebay.



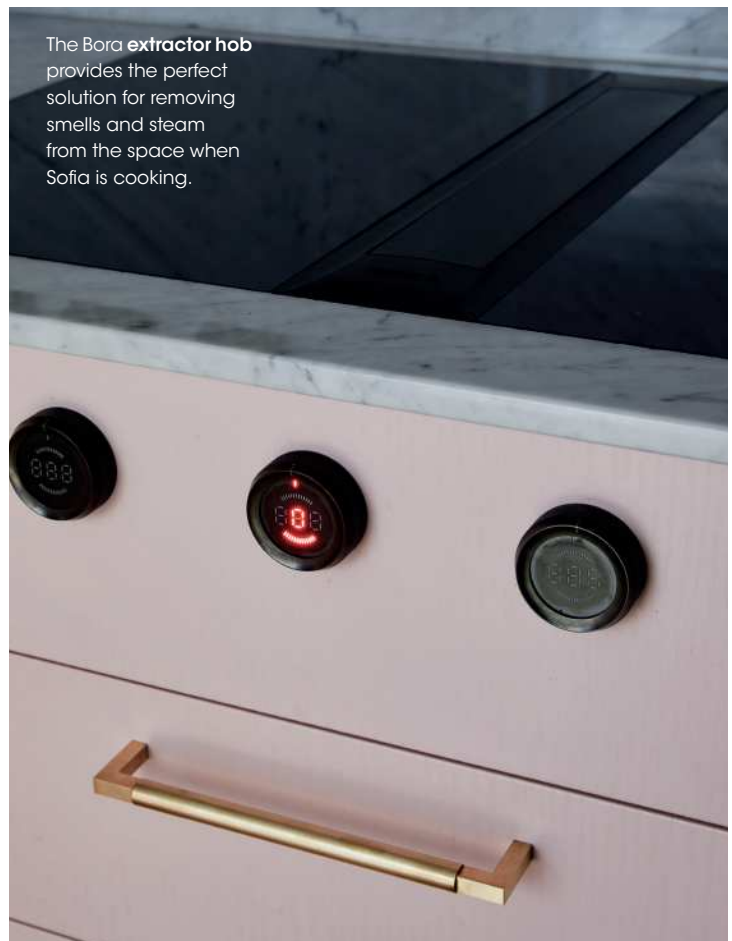
Sofia had to sacrifice having a full-length larder and a stack of ovens due to space limitations. This set up was the compromise. **Oven, Gaggenau.**



Everything you could need when cooking, from spices to oils, fit perfectly into dedicated drawers by the hob.



Half wall cabinets in slatted oak are operated by a motor, so won't hit the ceiling when opened.

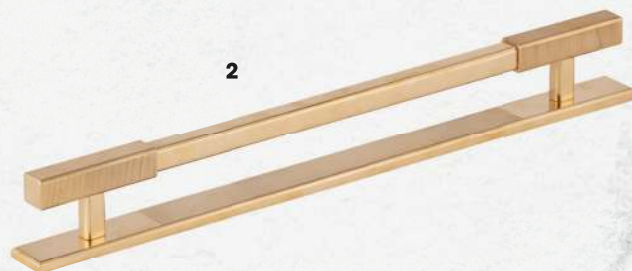


The Bora extractor hob provides the perfect solution for removing smells and steam from the space when Sofia is cooking.



The hob

1 KMDA 7634 FL induction hob with integrated extractor, £3199, Miele. miele.co.uk **2** T58TL6EN2 N 90 induction hob with integrated ventilation system, £3179, Neff. neff-home.com **3** CID834RDTB4 four-zone induction hob with integrated ventilation, £3000, Fisher & Paykel. fisherpaykel.com

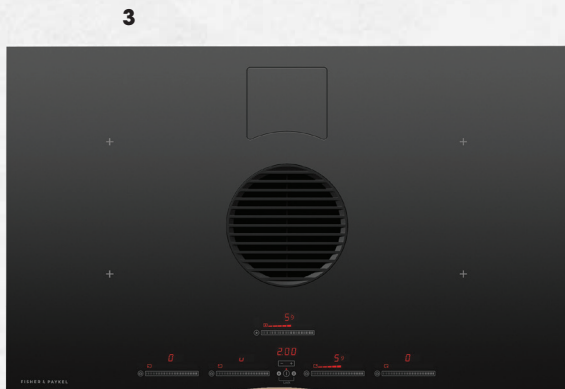


The handles

1 140cm brass pull bar with plate, £108, Buster + Punch. busterandpunch.com **2** Digbeth 29cm cabinet handle in hand burnished brass with backplate, £331.70 Armac Martin. armacmartin.co.uk **3** 32cm brass skyscraper knurled handle, £35.99, Dowsing & Reynolds. dowsingandreynolds.com

SOFIA'S DESIGN NOTES

From slick ventilated induction hobs, on-trend brass handles and colourful pink paint to the finishing touches, here's how to get Sofia's style in your home



The finishing touches

1 Set of three round glass storage jars, £20, Procook. procook.co.uk **2** Set of three sage green metal herb pots on tray, £19.95, Dibor. dibor.co.uk **3** Brass pepper mill, £48, Hudson Home. hudsonhome.co.uk **KBB**

The paint

1 Pointe Silk chalk wall paint, £55.95 for 2.5 litres, Annie Sloan. anniesloan.com **2** Pink Cloud emulsion, £45 for 2.5 litres, Woodchip & Magnolia. woodchipandmagnolia.co.uk **3** First light eggshell paint, £101 for 3.79 litres, Benjamin Moore. benjaminmoorepaint.co.uk

