

essential kitchen & bathroom business

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Food Furniture's chief designer and director, Rupert Lacey



The large island is the focal point of the kitchen. Family and friends can perch on the bar chairs, and browse through one of the recipe books pulled from the collection on the shelves under the worktop

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This kitchen has something of a theatrical appeal, ideally suited to both chief family cook, Dorothea, and her understudy – husband William – who loves nothing better than an appreciative audience for his weekend cooking exploits. Food Furniture performed its own culinary coup by transforming the kitchen from a cramped galley to a centre stage spectacular

Words **Amelia Thorpe** Pictures **Darren Chung**

Dorothea and William Longrigg love throwing parties. And while Dorothea describes herself as the ‘slog cook’ in charge of family meals, it is husband William who enjoys cooking for a crowd at the weekend. So having a tiny, gloomy galley in which to cook and entertain was not ideal. If that wasn’t enough, its narrow doorways made it awkward, not to mention risky, carrying trays of food and crockery to and from the kitchen. Access to the garden was through an old side entrance. “We love eating outdoors, so this was becoming a major irritation,” recalls Dorothea.

Finally, eight years after they moved into their south London home, they could stand it no longer. But achieving the large open-plan one-level family eating and dining space they had in mind meant re-building the entire back of their four-storey Victorian home. No easy feat, especially since nearly every room in the house was affected by the construction work. But Dorothea and William had a clear idea of what they wanted, so they persevered on through the building grime and swirling dust.

“Family life takes place in the kitchen,” says Dorothea. “So we wanted a light, open space, with splashes of colour for stronger impact. And I definitely wanted to get away from black granite, because it swallows up light.” With a bag bursting with cuttings torn from magazines and heads full of ideas, Dorothea and William followed up a recommendation and got in touch with chief designer and director of Food Furniture, Rupert Lacey.



business profile

Food Furniture

Who are we? Chief designer and director, Rupert Lacey, right; financial director, Gavin Philipps, left; chairman, Colin Dobson
Where are we? 27 Battersea Bridge Road, London SW11 3BA.
 Tel: 020 7924 2087. www.foodfurniture.co.uk

Business history Founded three years ago by Rupert Lacey, after 15 years designing furniture for super yachts. “I slowly moved into kitchen design, because there is a more consistent flow of work, better profits, and it’s more challenging,” Rupert says. Office space will be refurbished as a showroom later this year to attract more retail customers to its architect and designer client base. Annual turnover is £1m with plans to grow to £3m in three years

Business statement “A lot of kitchen companies work from a standard range. We don’t – we create something completely new each time”

Design influences “I enjoy experimenting with woods, metals, lacquers and worktop colours to create something different each time”

What we do Bespoke kitchens and furniture, prices from £30,000. Food Furniture will also “craft a kitchen from manufactured products” from £15,000

Sales stats “We produced 25 kitchens last year, and we have 14 on the go already this year. We’re growing rapidly”

Qualities and skills “I design every kitchen we produce. All our production is outsourced, because that gives us more flexibility and control according to our flow of work, but I personally check all the drawings and all the workmanship”

Favourite client “I enjoy working with the person who is actually going to use the kitchen”

Least favourite client “When you’ve put your heart and soul into a design, it’s very unrewarding when it’s not appreciated”

Strange but true “I’ve been asked to stain oak doors in orange before now”

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Rupert, they discovered, is no slouch in the kitchen himself. In fact, it turns out he's a passionate cook. So he and William immediately saw eye-to-eye, and in no time at all the concept of incorporating an island into the new kitchen became a definite addition. "William likes to have a stage to prepare his weekend meals with an audience of guests, so the idea of an island works perfectly," smiles Dorothea, recalling William's particular input to the design and the hours he and Rupert spent discussing the merits of various appliances. "I let William choose all the appliances and told him I was going to pick everything else," she continues. Which was just as well, because Dorothea's plans for the apple green glass splashback were not exactly met with enthusiasm by William. "It was incredibly difficult to convince him," recalls

Dorothea, "but we are both really happy with it now, because it has such a vibrant appeal."

The design for the room began with the floor, a Blue Mollanos limestone, which runs throughout. Picking up its creamy tones, Dorothea selected a vanilla paint colour and asked Rupert to match it in the gloss lacquer cabinetry. "But it was Rupert who suggested breaking up the vanilla with a section of dark wood," recalls Dorothea. Indian Laurel was chosen to create a bank of cupboards along one wall to inject a textural contrast to the high-gloss lacquer cabinetry on the other. "Everything we produce is made to order, which is much more exciting for a client than using a set range from a brochure," says Rupert. And what about the stainless steel worktop? "It reminds me of a 1930s holiday home in Switzerland we used to visit



The powerful extraction hood is by Gaggenau. The heavy duty burners on the Smeg range cooker were chosen by weekend chef William



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Glossy cream lacquered cabinetry and sleek steel create the light and friendly kitchen that Dorothea Longrigg specified, with a touch of individualism and impact added by the green splashback and unusual Resilica worktop.



We wanted a light, open space, with splashes of colour for stronger impact. And I definitely wanted to get away from black granite, because it swallows up light



The Resilica worktop is made from 85% recycled glass bonded together with resin. The flecks of green glass are interspersed with brown and blue, where people have thrown their bottles in the wrong recycling tank! But they create a stunning mix in this bespoke worktop. Brushed steel bar handles are simple and streamlined



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The zingy green glass splashback adds vibrancy

when I was a child," explains Dorothea. "It was important to have a seamless worktop without gaps for the water to run down, and something that would be easy to keep clean and hygienic."

But it's probably the Resilica island worktop that attracts the most admiring glances, sparkling as it does with unusual flecks of green, blue and even brown glass against a cream background. "It's made of 85% smashed and recycled glass that is bonded together with resin. And it can be lit from underneath which looks like something from Star Trek," says Rupert, flicking a switch to illuminate a row of under-lit square panels across the island. "It looks amazing, especially at night," says Dorothea.

If it's the sense of theatre in their kitchen that appeals to Dorothea and William, it is Rupert who enjoys creating things out of the norm. Years spent designing furniture for super yachts in the West Indies and Mediterranean gave him plenty of opportunity to study luxurious materials and hone his skills. "Working with 100 tons of mahogany on a regular basis gave me plenty of practice," he laughs. "I enjoy making beautiful, dramatic furniture."

A combination Neff microwave and single oven provide backup to the Smeg range cooker



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Chief designer and director, Rupert Lacey





'WE ARE BOTH REALLY HAPPY WITH IT NOW, BECAUSE IT HAS SUCH A VIBRANT APPEAL'



client profile

Name Dorothea and William Longrigg, and daughters Olivia and Antonia

Location Victorian family home in south London

Client wish list 'A light and friendly kitchen with lots of space for entertaining'

Problems Multiple levels in the warren of rooms that formed the semi-basement of the house needed to be levelled to create the one large cooking and dining space required by the family

The solution An extension to the rear of the property with wide doors that open to the garden and large skylights has created plenty of space for a light-filled and open-plan dining area and kitchen. Neutral tones enhance the feeling of space, while rich wood cabinetry adds warmth. Touches of colour in the green glass splashback and speckled worktop add personality and impact.

top left & right The kitchen leads onto a spacious dining area and wide doors open to the garden beyond

bottom right An island and range cooker on one side with sinks, cabinetry and appliances on the other creates a streamlined working area

bottom left A bank of Indian Laurel cabinets provide ample storage, including an invaluable pull-out larder

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product specification

Cabinetry Bespoke cream gloss lacquer and Indian Laurel, Food Furniture. Tel: 020 7924 2087. www.foodfurniture.co.uk

Appliances Range cooker, Smeg. Tel: 0870 442 4452. www.smeguk.com

Combination microwave, single oven, Neff. Tel: 0870 513 3090. www.neff.co.uk

Integrated fridge, De Dietrich. Tel: 0870 750 3503. www.dedietrich.co.uk

Integrated freezer, Vinidor wine cooler, Liebherr. Tel: 01977 665665. www.liebherr.com

Integrated dishwasher, Siemens. Tel: 0870 840 3300. www.siemensappliances.co.uk

Extraction hood, Gaggenau. Tel: 0870 125 4500. www.gaggenau.com

Sink Made-to-order stainless steel worktop and sinks, PWS. Tel: 01325 505555. www.pws.co.uk

Tap SilkSteel Fuji mixer tap, Franke. Tel: 0161 436 6280. www.franke.co.uk

Splashback (Coloured glass, J), Preedy & Sons. Tel: 020 8965 1323. www.preedyglass.com

Worktop Resilica, 8inch. Tel: 01273 51564. www.eightinch.co.uk

Stools Montana, John Lewis. Tel: 0845 604 9049. www.johnlewis.com

Flooring Blue Molianos Limestone, Stonehouse. Tel: 0800 093 9724. www.stonehousetiles.co.uk