



Gourmet ingredients

From bold brass to matchbooked marble, **Anthea Gerrie** is wowed by luxe kitchen finishes

Below Profile Jupiter slab and Fjord green matt slab, Trend Interiors

Right New Q-Line Tempesta Ceramica finish, Mereway. Prices on request



With the return of home entertaining and the rush towards maximalism that has taken over interior design, it should come as no surprise that bling has finally hit the kitchen.

That's bling as in brass, copper, bronze and other metallic finishes, gorgeously veined and inlaid marble, whole islands made of stone and luxurious splashback materials combining to create a real wow factor in the cooking and entertaining space which has

become the heart of every home. One of the pioneers in this field is Charlie Smallbone, who revolutionised the look of kitchens by introducing hand-painted cupboards in classy colours 45 years ago.

He sold Smallbone of Devizes, and, after buying it back and selling it again, founded Ledbury Studios, currently applying gorgeous finishes, including textured metals, inlaid marble, reclaimed antique glass and fluted timbers, to kitchens which start at £50,000 but more often run into six figures.

"We have used metal for the past five years to add texture and nuance," says Smallbone, who nearly always lacquers the copper sheets he bonds to timber but can also activate the metal to create the typical subtle greening of aged copper known as verdigris.

He also likes the deep silvery finish of pewter – "it ages beautifully" – bronze and zinc, which he says is "best used sparingly." And he has used "liquid metal" – metal powder mixed with resin – to create textural patterns beyond what can be achieved with solid sheets.

Ledbury offers both sealed finishes (for areas of the kitchen which interface with water) and living finishes (which age beautifully) for lower-traffic zones.

And Ledbury is not the only kitchen company seducing customers with luxe, shiny surfaces.

Matthew Andrews, senior designer at Poggenpohl Hampstead, says: "The trend of metallics in kitchens has soared in popularity over the past three to five years. Most of our current designs are seeing the additional use of finishes such as brass,





This photo
Roundhouse kitchen with honed Nero Absolute worktop, v-shaped island in matt sanded brass sheet and natural concrete worktop. Price on request



Clockwise from left
Pascali shelving unit, Atkin & Thyme, £749. Jet black and polished chrome with light oak cabinets, Officine Gullo. Kitchen including copper units and marble splashback/worktops by Ledbury Studio. Kitchen including pewter and copper door fronts, mirrored finishes and hand-painted cupboards (some hand-burnished on-site) by Ledbury Studio. Atmos kitchen in indigo and gold from Rational. Kitchen prices on request

gold and bronze and even full aluminium door fronts. One reason for the uptick is due to clients wanting to elevate the kitchen to a more luxurious space whilst always maintaining full functionality.

“Accessories such as sinks and taps are also becoming widely available in different metallic finishes, and the use of luxury marble is becoming more and more popular,” he adds.

Poggenpohl recently created a full wall of floor-to-ceiling cabinets in champagne-coloured aluminium for a client who preferred the shimmer of metal to a lacquered finish in the same shade. The drama of the finish was showcased by contrasting it with a black island, black sink sunk into a vanilla noir quartz island worktop and anthracite-coloured appliances.

Roundhouse, where kitchens start at £30,000, also offers units wrapped with

Consider adding an etched Venetian mirror

brass or copper as well as doors patinated with liquid metal. When it comes to splashbacks, it has pioneered the use of “book-matched” marble which reflects the ancient Chinese practice of framing individual pieces of marble, suggesting a mountainscape. In this new version, the landscape element is achieved by careful cutting and matching off a single marble slab, while units provide the framing.

Roundhouse and others are now extending the concept to marble islands;

Ledbury has also employed artisans to create inlaid marble in which colour, rather than pattern, creates the picture.

There are cost-saving ways of bringing bling to a kitchen without refitting. Furnisher Atkin & Thyme offers a brass sideboard and brass-fronted shelving unit which provide valuable storage space as well as display surfaces for prized pieces of serveware or drinking glasses.

And glass itself has a part to play in dressing up a kitchen — consider adding an etched and bevelled Venetian wall mirror, an antiqued glass splashback or feature lighting, whether a chandelier hanging from the ceiling to supplement functional counter lighting or LED strips below unit plinths to cast a glow at floor level. Once this might have looked like too much, but today glamour is the watchword in the best-dressed kitchens, all the way from top to bottom.