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EVERYTHING BUT *about* THE KITCHEN SINK

As a kitchen staple, there's much more to the trusty sink than you might think, explains Laurie Davidson

Planning a kitchen is an exciting, sometimes overwhelming process that comes with a multitude of things to think about, from the cabinetry and appliances to the colour scheme and tiles. Something that often gets overlooked in this process, however, is the humble kitchen sink, which, I think, is pretty crazy, considering how pivotal a role it has in our everyday lives. Instead of leaving your sink to become an afterthought further down the line, take a moment to think about not only what would suit your kitchen and provide the best functionality, but also what you need to take into account when it comes to placement and, of course, the material it's made from. So, whether you want your sink to complement your kitchen or make a statement, you'll be on the right track. We answer some of the key questions to keep your kitchen sink forefront in your mind...

WHAT SHOULD YOU CONSIDER BEFORE BUYING A KITCHEN SINK?

You may have your heart set on a marble sink or a double-bowl design. But before you part with your pennies only to find it doesn't work with your scheme, there are a few things to think about. There's the mounting style, tap compatibility, budget, design, as well as the configuration and size – all key factors when making a choice.

"The dimensions of your sink should suit the available space, and depth is important, too; deeper models accommodate large pots and reduce splashing, for example," says Charlie Smallbone, founder of Ledbury Studio. "The number of bowls also matters: if counter space is limited, a larger single-basin sink can maximise usability, while a double bowl allows for multitasking, such as rinsing and washing simultaneously."

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Butler 800 Gallery sink with metallic gold decorative design, £941, *Shaws of Darwen*.

"Then, there's the material choice, which is crucial," continues Charlie. "The sink should align with both your style preferences and practical needs – some materials are more resistant to scratches, stains, and heat than others."

Tap and plumbing compatibility is also important. "Ensure the sink has the correct number of tap holes for your tap set-up and that the plumbing supports additional features such as a garbage disposal or a water filtration system if you need it," Charlie advises. "Finally, your sink should never be crammed into a tight area. Ideally, there should be clear counter space on either side for drying dishes, food preparation, or placing kitchen essentials."

WHAT STYLE OF SINK SUITS WHICH KITCHEN?

Always dreamed of a roomy butler sink, or perhaps you prefer the sleek looks of a model that flows from the same material as your worktop? Ensuring you have a style of sink to suit your scheme should be a key factor, which means taking into account other elements in the room – for example, if you're taken with a traditional country sink aesthetic, then it may be that you need lower-height cabinets underneath. "As a rule, the look of a traditional or painted Shaker kitchen in a period setting can be enhanced by a white butler or farmhouse sink, which tends to be 90cm wide, with its white ceramic front on show," says Darren Taylor, managing director at Searle & Taylor. "I always suggest a sill is made from the same material as the worktop to go under the sink to mitigate water splashes on the shallow-height cabinetry beneath."

But how about if you want your kitchen sink in the same material as your worktop? "To provide a seamless look in a space with a Silestone surface, for example, we will include a sink in the same Silestone material, together with a fabricated drainer groove," says Darren. "A flexible alternative is to choose a stone cladding for an 1810 Axix sink, to complement the worktop."

You may want to take into account the age and style of your house, too. "If I was tasked with designing a kitchen in a modern extension, I would review the aesthetic of the existing house it was attached to, to see what would complement it best," says Kate Clare, founder of Loud Architects. "If the house is Victorian or Edwardian, or even Georgian, I like to have a stark contrast with the sink design; such as stainless-steel, brass, Corian or tiled-into sinks. If there is

an entrance arch or curves internally, then a curvy sink can be a subtle but well-received design touch – an homage to the existing architecture and style."

WHAT TYPE OF MOUNT SHOULD I GO FOR?

The way your sink is integrated can have a big impact on the finished look. To start with, there are inset sinks, which are a popular choice and simply sit into a hole cut into the countertop. A small raised lip around the outside helps seal the sink.

Next up, flush-fit sinks, fitted within the worktop, offer a smooth look, are easy to keep clean, but slightly trickier to install.

Undermounted sinks are designed to attach to the worktop from below and are ideal if you like a minimal look. This style of sink takes up less counter space than the above two options, however you'll need to have your tap mounted onto the countertop.

WHERE'S THE BEST PLACE TO SITE YOUR SINK?

There's no hard and fast rule, as the location will largely depend on your kitchen layout, however there are a few things to consider. "Placing the sink under a window is a traditional choice, as it allows for a shorter waste pipe and is one of the most cost-effective solutions," says Tamsin Mills, brand communications manager at Blanco. "This set-up also offers a pleasant view. For more counter space, a compact sink may be ideal, blending into the background. But if natural light is a requirement for you, placing the sink in front of a window combines both practical and visual appeal."

In a more spacious kitchen, an island can provide the perfect location for a sink, offering efficiency and also keeping it in a more social spot. "Although an island sink provides a social connection, it may be less appealing for those prioritising aesthetics, storage, or minimal maintenance," says Alex Main, director of The Main Company. "The decision depends on your everyday kitchen habits and design preferences. Having a sink on both the wall and island works best if you have a large kitchen with ample counter space and you cook or entertain frequently and need separate preparation and clean-up zones. If space is limited or you don't have a strong need for two sinks, focusing on one well-placed sink is usually more practical." Alex adds that sink covers or worktop boards that fit over the sink can hide it when not in use. They also extend your counter space for preparation, serving



or entertaining, whilst offering a sleek look. "Materials such as wood, stainless steel or stone can match or complement the island's surface for a seamless look," he says.

WHAT GOES UNDER AND AROUND YOUR SINK?

The age-old question: should you have storage, bins or more cabinetry space under your sink? And is there anything you need to include next to it? Ultimately, the answer, as always, is that it really depends on how you live and what items you are most likely to need close to your sink.





above A sink featuring rails for holding pans or steamers and is large enough to make cleaning big items a breeze? Clever! Available in stainless steel, Silgranit and ceramic, *Blanco's* Etagon sink comes in different sizes and installation options – shown is the Etagon 300-U in Rock Grey.

top left *Franke's* Box Center BWX 220 54-27 stainless-steel inset sink comes with an accessory set comprised of a frame cover, wire rack, strainer bowl, food preparation platter, chopping board, knife holder, and knife set, making everyday jobs easier to carry out. Priced £1798.

left If you have room, why not invest in a double sink like the one in this kitchen by *Ledbury Studio*. It's made from Carrara marble and is inset into the worktop, set above cabinets in a brushed stainless-steel finish, with space either side for food preparation.

