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Treasured family pieces and heirlooms will be perfectly in keeping with a new classic kitchen, whereas they're likely to look suddenly out of place in a very contemporary kitchen.

Leila Roberts, Fired Earth

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Urban-based properties tend to have more contemporary classic kitchens. This is achieved through having composite stone or solid surface worktops, plus brushed nickel hinges, knobs and handles.

Tim Higham, Higham Furniture

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Colours and materials

Classic kitchens tend to be made from classic woods – again for the simple reason that they won't go out of style. Warm oak or beech, or a richer cherry or walnut, will look good in their natural state or will come unadorned for

Above left: The Henley oak kitchen from Neptune is sealed with a light finish so the beautiful natural grain of the wood shows through. And while it is in fact fully fitted, the skirting system gives it the look and feel of semi-fitted or freestanding. It is priced from £12,000

Above right: Marking the popularity of classic kitchens, Mereway Kitchens has launched the English Revival Shaker kitchen. Shown here in oak, it will also be available in five painted colours and a ready-to-paint option will be introduced for those customers who want to choose their own colour palette. Priced from £12,000

Opposite page, top: A classic look can work equally well in a smaller kitchen as is shown with this Shaker kitchen from John Lewis of Hungerford. The glazed wall cupboards are painted in Flour, complemented with chunky oak worktops and a central island in Easy Graphite. From £9000

Bottom: The Victorian kitchen range from Cotteswood is shown here painted in Edwardian cream and teamed with Cosmos black granite worktops. It features a double-beaded door finish and plain drawer fronts in maple and is shown without a kickboard to create a freestanding impression. Prices start from £20,000



painting. And in terms of colours, there are inevitably trends because no one can exist entirely out of the moment.

“Customers are continuing to opt for classic designs but are being more experimental with the colour, thereby giving them a contemporary edge,” explains Leila Roberts of Fired Earth. “Bamiyan Blue – a bold, statement blue – has proved to be very popular, while Oak Apple exudes a gentle warmth and offers an alternative to more traditional cream.”

Plus points

Aside from appealing to our inner nostalgia, the classic kitchen carries several other advantages. A painted kitchen may require some upkeep over the years and need to be touched up, however this is more than outweighed by a two-fold advantage, as Naomi Dean of Harvey Jones explains. “A simple hand-painted kitchen can be instantly updated with a fresh coat of paint, and homeowners are also given the freedom to experiment with any colour in the kitchen safe in the knowledge that they can simply repaint at any time.”

Finally, if the time comes when you have to move and leave your beloved classic kitchen behind, there is a practical advantage that it's unlikely to alienate any potential buyers or – perhaps more crucially – renters. New owners may very well rip out a kitchen when they move in, but it's an expensive undertaking and if they can easily live with the perfectly serviceable – as well as classically stylish – existing one, this could help make the sale and even add value to it. In short, everybody wins.

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What is interesting is that the classic kitchen design now seems to be appealing to all age groups – not just older people but a younger age bracket of customers.

John Sims-Hilditch, Neptune

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Nostalgia is alive and well and seemingly living in all of us in this time of economic difficulty. Surely, we reason, if we all reverted to a kinder age where make do and mend was the order of the day, then we might just survive the recession and emerge intact. But people will always need things and so the nostalgia trend becomes open to interpretation: we will still buy, but we'll do it with more respect for longevity and value for money – which can only be a good thing. So, when it comes to a major purchase like a kitchen, the nostalgia trend has led to resurgence in classic looks and styles.

“There is a definite trend towards ‘classic’ kitchens,” says Steven de Munnich of Smallbone of Devizes. “These have all the craft values of traditional designs and construction but with a pared-down style that suits both period and contemporary homes and offers the advantage of being really timeless.”

In short, when you're investing as much money as you do in a new kitchen, you want something that will last, that won't go out of date as soon as the paint's dry and that you won't grow out of. The classic kitchen fits perfectly into this because, by definition, it can't be a slave to fashion.

Defining classic

When we speak of ‘classic’ kitchens, a couple of kitchen types spring to mind: those that make sweeping visual statements with elaborate columns, carvings and corbels; and country kitchens with light wood, cathedral arch doors and obligatory gingham curtains. But there is an unadorned, altogether less fussy option that is finding favour with young and old alike – plain or painted in-frame wood doors in variations on the Shaker look.

“The Shaker kitchen has stayed top of our bestseller list, despite many popular designs snapping at its heels, because of its versatility and ability to suit any type of home,” says Magnet's Anjum Ahmed. “I believe no other door style can change a kitchen's look so dramatically – it can be styled from traditional to contemporary just by swapping the handle. Add cutting-edge appliances, worktops and accessories and you can achieve an even bigger contrast.” ▶

Above left: The main focus of this Davonport tulipwood kitchen is an amazing 4m-long island with a circular breakfast bar at one end and preparation area at the other. Cream-painted units are complemented with pale granite worktops. Davonport kitchens start from £35,000

Below left: This Chalon Original freestanding kitchen, made from Quebec yellow pine, has been hand painted in a selection of the company's own unique finishes, of which there are more than 70 available. Chalon kitchens are priced from around £30,000

Opposite page, top left: Natural and traditional materials such as oak will stand the test of time, as shown in this new fitted version of Fired Earth's classic Bastide kitchen. Designed by Charles Smallbone, it is shown here in Weald green and light oak and costs from £35,000

Middle left: From Harvey Jones, the Original kitchen is great for those looking to add a subtle element of period charm to their home. It features delicate detailing including beading on the doors and drawers and an ornate cornice. Kitchens start from £17,000

Bottom left: A classic design matches the impressive dimensions of this kitchen space. This maple and walnut Edwin Loxley kitchen features symmetrical countertop-mounted curved pantry cupboards either side of the window that are echoed on the island unit. Kitchens start from £20,000