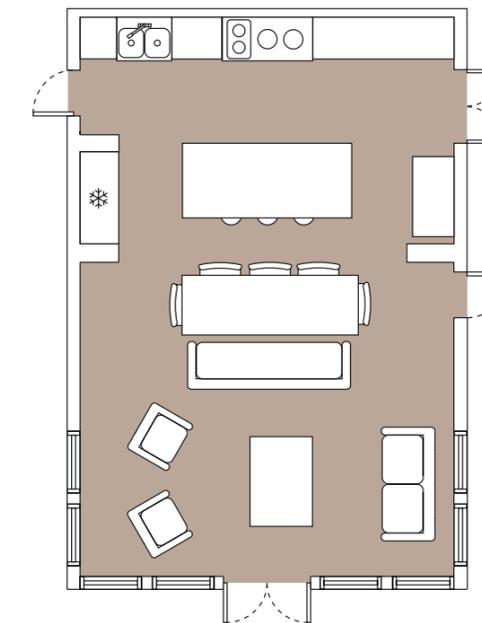


# High contrast

The heart of this Surrey home is now refined, relaxed and peaceful

Words: **Sophie Baylis** Photography: **Darren Chung**





**Opening page (p103):** Roundhouse designed a surround for homeowner Jo's AGA to accommodate the Westin extractor and offer additional storage. This is one of very few cupboards in the kitchen, as Jo tends to prefer drawers.

**Left:** Jo has located the integrated dishwasher, range and a butler sink along the back wall, leaving the island unit free for prepping and socialising. A separate utility room means that she can keep her kitchen clutter-free.

**Below:** Jo prefers the less obtrusive look of open shelves to bulky wall units that eat into the space. By mixing natural touches and favourite objects in a casual, unstudied way, she links the kitchen to the adjoining living space.



Old homes live many lives and this one in Surrey is no exception. Built around two centuries ago and sprawling by the standards of most, its previous owners exploited the space and turned it into a bed and breakfast, carving up the glorious Georgian rooms into a series of tiny bedrooms and bathrooms. By the time property developer Jo Rezos and her husband Gavin arrived on the scene, though, the house was in a state of disrepair and in desperate need of rescuing. Many people would have baulked at the prospect, but Jo saw it as challenge – the next in a series of property development projects she's overseen in the UK and her native Australia.

Today, all traces of the B&B are gone and the rabbit warren of rooms has been replaced by light-filled spaces that flow together seamlessly. "Jo can stand in the kitchen, which is at one end of the house, and

see all the way through to the other end," explains Victoria Marriott of Roundhouse, who helped Jo create the star attraction: a timeless, quintessentially traditional kitchen punctuated by modern accents.

"I like contrast," explains Jo. "It's one of my favourite things – modern things in an older house and old things in a new house. I like a touch of light-heartedness." Contrast is the theme of the whole kitchen, from the high-performance appliances – Sub-Zero, AGA and Miele – to the mix of materials, including granite, wood and marble, a chunky slab of which is used on top of the island.

"It's Statuario marble, which unfortunately is becoming very rare, but I love to mix beauty with practicality," explains Jo, who insists the marble's maintenance is well worth the effort. "I don't cut lemons on it, and tomatoes are another bad idea," she says. "And if we have guests over, what I tend to do is put down beautiful chopping boards, so that you protect it without looking like you're protecting it."

Despite Jo's careful approach, though, her kitchen isn't about long, stuffy dinners.

The good old-fashioned comfort of a George Smith sofa teamed with the reclaimed dining table puts paid to that, as does the casual living area overlooking the glorious garden. The light-coloured walls, in conjunction with the large windows and French doors, flood the space with light, creating a serene atmosphere so visitors can truly relax.

Of course, hard work happens here too, but Jo was adamant that her kitchen shouldn't look too much like a kitchen. "I rarely, if ever, use wall cabinets if I can possibly help it," she says. She's opted instead for open shelves where she can mix curiosities with functional pieces. Even the larder looks like a piece of freestanding furniture until the doors are opened and its true identity is revealed. The one piece that is clearly kitchen kit is the Sub-Zero fridge-freezer, which sits flush within an alcove. It could have been hidden behind cabinet doors but was very deliberately kept on show. "I think it's a work of art in itself," Jo explains.

Jo's beautiful-looking kitchen is also a highly efficient one. "The idea of cupboards is obsolete because so much of what's stored

is inaccessible towards the back," Jo says. Instead, she's chosen large drawers with customised storage inside so she can easily grab what she needs.

The kitchen renovation was not without its challenges, however. Jo was sure that she wanted flagstones to run throughout the ground floor of the house. By their very nature, flagstones are cold underfoot, so she also specified underfloor heating. "Our builder believes we're possibly the only people to have ever done this because no-one would guarantee the work," recalls Jo. "They thought that, once we heated it, everything would crack." But in fact, it has worked beautifully. "We never heat the flagstones to any great extent; rather it's just enough to take the chill off," she explains.

Another success story is the wooden-panelled ceiling, which looks as though it's original to the house but was actually added at the same time as the kitchen. "I knew I didn't want a plain plaster ceiling," says Jo, whose instincts, once again, were bang on. The upshot is a kitchen that works from top to bottom. **[KBB]**



The island is kept clear of utensils and storage so the family and their friends can congregate there and enjoy the stunning Statuario marble top.

**Below:** Jo instantly fell in love with the gentle sheen of the splashback tiles, which she discovered in Morocco. "They look old, so they help the kitchen feel as though it's been there for quite some time," she says. The black granite worktop, with its slightly textured finish, makes a cool but interesting contrast.



**Above:** Designed like a piece of freestanding furniture, the larder sums up Jo's belief that the inside of a cupboard should be just as beautiful as the outside.



**Above:** Customised drawers create a more efficient kitchen that's easier and more enjoyable to use. The inserts are solid wood, while the exterior is painted in an understated Farrow & Ball grey called Ammonite.

## Q&A

**Kitchen designer Victoria Marriott says...**



**Do you have any tips for people embarking on a similar project?**

Have a clear idea of the feel of the space and the aesthetic, but also think about how you plan to use it. For example, how do you want to use the island? Do you want to be able to sit at it with a glass of wine, or would you rather be working at it? How you use the space is what drives the design.

**Were there any major U-turns during the project?**

The only change was the final paint colour for the furniture. Jo felt that the colour she had initially chosen wasn't quite right. These cabinets are hand-painted on site, so it's sometimes difficult choosing colours beforehand because they look so different in-situ. She settled on a subtle grey called Ammonite by Farrow & Ball.

**What was the biggest challenge with the project?**

Jo is a very good friend, so I wanted to get it just right for her and her family. Probably the biggest challenge for me was ensuring that the main contractor had all the information necessary to create the space we wanted. The success of the design depended on this, like the AGA surround and the alcove for the refrigeration, so that it all worked effortlessly as a design and went in smoothly. Luckily the builder was great to liaise with, incredibly helpful and the work very accurate and to a very high standard.



**Above:** The house was once broken up into many small rooms. However, Jo has pieced it back together by restoring the large spaces and running reclaimed flagstone flooring from one end of the house to the other to create a sense of continuity.

## SourceBook

### DESIGN

**Kitchen** Victoria Marriott, Roundhouse (020 7297 6220 or [www.roundhousedesign.com](http://www.roundhousedesign.com))

### KITCHEN

**Cabinetry** Bespoke kitchen, Roundhouse, as before, painted in Ammonite, Farrow & Ball (01202 876141 or [www.farrow-ball.com](http://www.farrow-ball.com))

**Worktops** 20mm Nero Assoluto granite in an antique finish, Roundhouse, as before; Statuario marble (on island), Domus (020 8481 9500 or [www.domustiles.co.uk](http://www.domustiles.co.uk))

**Splashback** Tiles from Morocco. For similar try Domus, as before

**Taps** Gessi Oxygen chrome taps with pull-out ([www.gessi.com](http://www.gessi.com)), Roundhouse, as before; Boiling-water tap, for similar try Zip (0845 600 5005 or [www.zipindustries.co.uk](http://www.zipindustries.co.uk))

**Sink** Regis Farmhouse double bowl, Roundhouse, as before

**Appliances** Fridge-freezer and wine storage unit, Sub-Zero (0845 250 0010 or [www.subzero-wolf.co.uk](http://www.subzero-wolf.co.uk)); Cache extractor, Westin (01484 421585 or [www.westin.co.uk](http://www.westin.co.uk)); Dishwasher, Miele (0330 160 6600 or [www.miele.co.uk](http://www.miele.co.uk)); AGA (0845 712 5207 or [www.agaliving.com](http://www.agaliving.com))

**Flooring** Flagstones, Ribble Reclamation (01772 794534 or [www.ribbon-reclamation.co.uk](http://www.ribbon-reclamation.co.uk))

**Pendants** For similar try Furniture & Arts Building (020 7352 2046 or [www.furniturecave.co.uk](http://www.furniturecave.co.uk))

**Barstools** For similar try the retro barstool in red from Simply Bar Stools (0117 330 2277 or [www.simplybarstools.co.uk](http://www.simplybarstools.co.uk))

**Sofa** George Smith (020 7384 1004 or [www.georgesmith.co.uk](http://www.georgesmith.co.uk))

**Dining table and chairs** For similar try Neptune (01793 427300 or [www.neptune.com](http://www.neptune.com))

### COST

Bespoke kitchens from Roundhouse start at £35,000



**Above:** The barstools appeal to Jo's love of mixing old with new, but they're also a great place to perch.

