

MORE FOR LESS

Choose eye-catching materials and a clever layout to make a limited budget stretch a long way

Creating a dream kitchen needn't break the bank but keeping costs down will require imagination, discipline and careful planning. Devise a "spend versus save" list for your designer which clarifies the areas where you absolutely have to have the best and others where you are prepared to compromise. Also make a list of any existing appliances or fittings such as lighting and electrical sockets that can potentially be reused.

It helps to think in terms of volumes; choosing a more affordable floor or worktop, which covers a large surface area, will make a

significant difference to the budget. In contrast, choosing more expensive or exotic materials for small areas, such as the wall space between hob and hood, will help to add interest and character.

A good layout will also enhance the design impact of simple cabinets. Rather than having them hug the wall in straight runs, consider a centrepiece island with breakfast bar or try mixing up cabinet heights to add variety. "Using coloured glass splashbacks with plain gloss cabinets will create huge visual impact for a very reasonable price," explains Neil Lerner, director of Neil Lerner Kitchens.



Catherine and Ash Alam were ready to think outside the box in order to achieve a statement kitchen on a tight budget. They have three young children and love cooking. Ash in particular is known for his Asian feasts, so the appliance specification included an extra combi-oven and a five-zone induction hob, which cost £955, the biggest single spend on the project. "It was worth every penny," says designer Dominique McLaughlin of James James Kitchens, which is based near the Alam's Cheshire home. "Ash was blown away with the speed and control of wok cooking on induction."

The couple wanted cabinets of solid German construction, but were prepared to compromise on the worktops. Rather than granite or solid stone, they chose a striking 10cm-thick Applewood laminate worktop, which wraps around the island unit and the hob run, and which surpassed their brief both on looks and budget. "It was half the price of granite but, by using the chunky depth and adding end panels to frame the cabinets, it peeps up the plain white doors, and the warmth of the Applewood grain is really striking," says Dominique.

Another budget-friendly feature was the stud walls, which incorporate the storage and appliance banks either side of the hob. These units have a much lighter appearance than traditional floor-standing cabinets as they are sunk into the "walls" – perfect for the Alams' fairly narrow kitchen. The construction of the walls, including plastering, only cost a few hundred pounds but the effect is stunning. Painting them a zesty apple green proved an inexpensive way to bring the kitchen to life.

THE DETAILS

DESIGNER Dominique McLaughlin, James James Kitchens, 0151 625 9329, jamesjameskitchens.com.

THE BRIEF An edgy and fun yet practical, family-friendly kitchen.

BUDGET Just under £15,000.

SOURCES Cabinets and worktops, Rational at James James Kitchens, as above. **Appliances**, Neff, 0844 892 8989, neff.co.uk. **Sink and taps**, Franke, 0161 436 6280, franke.co.uk. **Paint**, Tarragon Glory 5, Dulux, 0870 444 1111, dulux.co.uk. ▶