

Where sixties style meets 2016



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THE thought of a brand new kitchen is enough to bring a wistful smile to the face of any homeowner.

According Australian Bureau of Statistics data, the kitchen is one of the most commonly renovated rooms in the house (along with the bathroom) while figures from the Housing Industry of Australia (HIA) suggest there were around 150,000 kitchen renovation jobs in the 12 months to June this year.

Modern kitchens are sleek and glossy and look great in contemporary homes but what if your home is a little older — say dating from the 1960s or 1970s?

Modern amenities and appliances are particularly important in these homes, especially if a sale is in the near future but maintaining a look that is consistent with the rest of the home is just as critical.

“The kitchen is now a multipurpose space for the whole family, so when planning a mid-century kitchen renovation, you may need to factor in some structural changes so it can integrate with open-plan areas,” says Travis Dean from Cantilever Interiors who specialise in renovating older kitchens.



When planning a mid-century kitchen renovation, you may need to factor in some structural changes so it can integrate with open-plan areas. Picture: Cantilever Interiors

BEFORE YOU START

If you have a dated kitchen in need of improvement, there are a few things you need to consider before going ahead with a full renovation.

The first is, of course, budget. Don't think that because you have a limited amount to play with you won't be able to achieve a great result renovating an older kitchen.

Rob Drechsel, co-founder of Sherbrooke Constructions says simply replacing the end panels on your cabinetry can give your kitchen a much-needed facelift.

"A lot of the time an older kitchen will have a great base carcass so if you're on a tight budget and don't want to carry out major structural work, consider replacing existing surfaces using a new paint finish or cladding," he says.

Just remember to stick with the same or similar colour palette and choice of finish to ensure your kitchen doesn't end up as a shining beacon of modern design in an otherwise period home.

If your budget can stretch a little further, update a mid-century kitchen by opening up your space to increase interaction with living and dining spaces.

“Mid-century homes were typically designed with kitchens closed off in a back corner, however modern lifestyles now require a kitchen to have greater interaction with other rooms in the home,” says Travis.



Instead of a dining table, incorporate a return/breakfast bar to open the kitchen up to the living spaces. Picture: Karen Aston Design

Interior designer Karen Aston says her recent renovation of a 1960s home involved taking a mid-century design idea and modernising it just a touch.

“There was a dining table located in the middle of the kitchen which was quite restrictive in the use of space,” she says.

“By removing it we could extend the kitchen slightly and incorporate a return/breakfast bar. These were increasingly found in later mid-century kitchens as they opened the kitchens up to the living spaces.

“It was a new idea from this period that we have really embraced today.”

If you do decide to carry out major structural work, bear in mind that mid-century kitchens were often far less generous when it comes to bench space and depth so a rethink of dimensions might be necessary especially if you are purchasing new appliances.

“Sometimes the benches in mid-century kitchens can be lower and or narrower than we are used to today and may make it difficult for new sinks or dishwashers to be accommodated,” says Karen.

“It’s always recommended to check the height of your dishwasher prior to purchasing if you are not making major structural changes.”



Mid-century design can also be revered through ornamental items so hunt down some original pieces to add authenticity to your space if looking a little “too modern”. Picture: Karen Aston Design

IT’S ALL IN THE DETAIL

Keeping seemingly small details such as architraves, skirtings and mouldings in tact when renovating a mid-century kitchen can really tie your new space back to its heritage.

Typically mid-century ceilings and walls were quite plain, with decorative details like ceiling roses, cornices, and any excessive flourish on skirtings and architraves left out.

“In some older homes that get renovated, there can be a distinct line between the old and the new,” says Rob. “If your kitchen renovation involves any kind of extension be sure to keep details the same throughout.”

If you want to update surfaces but are unsure about what will fit, Karen suggests sticking with a palette of stainless steel or composite stone for bench and countertops.

“If a full update is required due to worn out cabinetry and finishes then keep with the ethos of this period,” she says. “Mid-century kitchens were all about clean lines, simplicity and function. So think minimal D pulls or cut outs for cabinets, easy clean, low maintenance surfaces and the use of warm timber veneers or plywood, or simple white laminate doors.”

The splashback is another detail to get exactly right or risk your kitchen looking too modern and out of place.

“A lot of modern homes have glass splashbacks but a mid-century kitchen will always have a tiled splashback,” says Rob.

FINISHING TOUCHES

Mid-century design can also be referenced through ornamental items so embrace your local antique store and hunt down some original pieces to add authenticity to your space if modern appliances are looking a little “too modern”.

“Mid-century design can be evoked in the way you dress a kitchen, so designing display areas like open shelves allows you to reference the era in different ways,” says Travis. “It also means you can rotate the objects when you feel like a change of scene.”



HANDY HINTS

Let there be light

In the 1960s and '70s, kitchens were often tucked away at the back of the house. If knocking down walls to create an open-plan space is outside your budget, you can instantly bring a dated kitchen into the modern era by adding more natural light either via a skylight or replacing existing doors with french doors which open up to the outdoors.

Cupboard facelift

Often, the bones of a mid-century kitchen will still be in great shape. Before you consider a complete remodel, think about keeping the cabinetry and just changing the drawer and cupboard fronts for a fraction of the price.

Splashback impact

Use geometric tiles for a great splashback. Look for hexagonal or diamond shapes and keep the look simple by using the same colour grout as the tiles, or use a contrasting grout to make them really pop.

Small details

If budgets are really tight, you'll be amazed how much of a difference it can make to change seemingly minor things like power-point covers, light switches, handles and tapware.

HOW TO GET MID-CENTURY STYLE

Just love the look? Make a modern kitchen appear more 'mid-century' by including these hallmarks of the style.

- Real wood: Look for pieces made of real (not pressed) teak, walnut, oak and rosewood.
- Bold pendant lights: No tidy, recessed downlights please — the bolder, the better when it comes to lights. Look for pieces that are almost like sculptural art for a striking look.
- Bar carts: Fill your bar cart with vintage glasses, expensive liquors and of course a cocktail shaker.
- Clean lines: The 50s, in particular were all about simplicity. Replace curved, ornate kitchen cabinets with plain, flat wood ones and, overall, keep the lines in your kitchen clean, simple and uncluttered.
- Accessorise: Think about adding 60s-style stools to your breakfast bar, a 50s-style clock on the wall, metal planters or even a must-have sunburst mirror — an icon of the era.

More Cantilever Interiors, cantileverinteriors.com; Karen Aston Design, karenastondesign.com.au; Sherbrooke Constructions, sherbrookeconstructions.com.au