



BEFORE



### Fact file...

#### Meet the renovators

Athina Bluff, founder of Topology Interiors (topologyinteriors.com), lives here with her partner Theo McInnes, a photojournalist

#### Makeover brief

To replace the old kitchen and create a new layout incorporating more storage, worksurface area and lighting – all in a stylish design unified with the open-plan living room

#### Project costs

**Cabinetry & worktop**

£4,000 **Sink & tap** £215

**Appliances** £2,200

**Lighting** £100 **Tiles** £210

**Total spend** £6,725



Dimensions W2.3m x L2.6m

# ‘MY NEW KITCHEN IS A GAME CHANGER’

A new layout was the key to Athina Bluff’s well-lit, fully-functioning basement cooking space

Feature JANE CRITTENDEN Photographer GEORGIA BURNS

**WHY DID YOU HATE YOUR OLD KITCHEN?** For one, it wasn’t to my taste, but the main problem with the old layout was that there weren’t enough worksurfaces for our cooking needs, or storage for all of our food and ingredients. It wasn’t unusual to open a cupboard and have a bag of rice fall on my head!

**HOW DID YOU WANT TO CHANGE THE SPACE?** The whole layout needed re-planning with useful storage, but it was a bit of a challenge to fit everything in. We wanted a slimline dishwasher and two ovens, and to replace the cumbersome tall fridge-freezer with an under-the-counter design.

**WHAT WERE YOUR MUST-HAVE FEATURES?** We wanted smart lighting, so we fitted Ikea’s Tradfri kit under the top cabinets and within the floating oak shelves. It’s remote-controlled with options to have on a bright mode for cooking or dimmed for eating, so it’s been absolutely brilliant – I’ll definitely be recommending it to my own clients. We also splashed out on a marble-effect quartz worktop for a luxe look that is just like the real thing, but much less expensive.

**DID YOU HAVE A PROJECT BUDGET IN MIND?** We thought we might spend around £6,000, so allocated a rough cost for the cupboards, appliances, worktop and labour. We’re definitely pleased we bought the kitchen from Ikea: as everything is itemised during the design process, we were able to go away and mull over the list before we took the plunge and ordered it. ▶

◀ *Enhanced light* Light-reflecting surfaces in the high-gloss wall cupboards, glossy tiled splashback and polished quartz worktop help to illuminate the low-ceiling basement kitchen

# Sort yourself out.

Smart, stylish and landlord friendly. Shelving, mirrors and clothes stands that fit small spaces. Can be placed and removed on a whim using discreet non-slip silicon pads. All made from smooth, lacquered oak.



**WERE THERE ANY DISASTERS ALONG THE WAY?** Ikea organised the fit-out for us, which went extremely smoothly; the only difficulty was squeezing the delivery of 100 or so boxes into our small flat – I found myself buttering my toast one morning on a tile as I couldn't find our plates!

**WHAT WAS THE BEST BARGAIN YOU FOUND?** The worktop was going to extend out to the left of the oven as there wasn't a base cupboard narrow enough to fit underneath. So the fitters suggested making us a wine rack using the cupboard cut-offs, and finished it within an hour – it's a really lovely bespoke touch.

**DID ANYTHING COST MORE THAN EXPECTED?** The tiler didn't realise I wanted a herringbone pattern splashback, so we had to pay him for the extra time it took! Otherwise no, as the itemised kitchen plan meant we knew exactly what we were committing to. For example, before we placed our order, we decided to take out the lights inside the drawers as we didn't really need them.

**▲ Harmonious feel** Anthracite and light grey tones in the cabinetry blend the kitchen with the newly decorated living room

**WHAT WAS THE BIGGEST LESSON YOU LEARNED?** Part of me was nervous we'd used too much of the space, and that the kitchen would encroach into the living room. But I needn't have worried as my design instinct at the start was spot on – plus, I had reassurance from the kitchen planner when they came to measure up.

**DID YOU STICK TO YOUR ORIGINAL BUDGET?** We fully intended to have a laminate worktop, but as the project progressed, we decided to stretch ourselves and go for quartz, which cost a couple of thousand pounds rather than a few hundred!

**HOW DO YOU FEEL NOW IT'S ALL FINISHED?** I love it – we're both keen cooks, so to have lots of storage and worktop space is a dream come true. When I come in here, it still gives me a little buzz. ➤



▲ *Design details* (Clockwise from top left) Matt black finishes enhance the contemporary feel throughout, and a handy hanging rail with storage baskets maximises wall space; using plain tiles in a herringbone pattern is an easy way to add interest without bright colour; the worktop overhang was turned into a savvy wine rack using leftover pieces of cabinetry; open ash shelving above the sink has built-in downlights for a soft ambience ☼

*Shopping basket* **Cabinetry** Ringhult cabinets in high-gloss grey and Kungsbacka cabinets in anthracite, £2,000; Tutemo ash open cabinet, £30; Eneryda cup handle, £9 for two; Bagganäs knobs, £5 for two, all Ikea **Worktop** Marble-effect quartz, £2,000, Sheridan **Sink & tap** Havsen inset sink, £115; Bosjön mixer tap, £100, both Ikea **Tiles** Artisanu gloss white tiles, £72.80 per sqm, Topps Tiles **Appliances** Livslåga gas hob, £150; Finsmakare microwave combi, £600; Finsmakare Forced air oven with pyro steam function, £800; Matålskare extractor, £175, all Ikea **Lighting** Omlopp lighting strips, £25; Hektar ceiling track, £25; Vaxmyra LED spotlight, £9 for two, all Ikea **Accessories** Fintorp knife rack, £7; Smååta chopping board, £10; both Ikea. Industrial pole with hanging basket, £115, Maisons du Monde



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