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The butler has a few tricks

Popularity of working secondary kitchen spaces is no flash-in-the-pan trend

BEYOND THE PANTRY DOORS

KIRSTEN CRAZE

CRUMBS on your island benchtop and clunky toasters lurking in corners – it's the kind of mess that drives a self-declared MasterChef to distraction.

As beautiful as an open-plan kitchen can be, the reality is once a hungry family moves in, so does all their mealtime mess.

Homeowners are turning to butler's pantries to hide their daily disorder and, despite the aspirational name, these fancy kitchen cupboards are not just for the wealthy.

The butler did it

Felicity Page, senior designer at Freedom Kitchens, says butler's pantries are booming.

"Having the extra benchtop space for food prep is a very practical feature," she says.

Sydney-based architect Alex Roth says the purpose of a butler's pantry remains the same.

"While we don't generally use them as places for staff, we do appreciate that they allow us to work away in private," he says.

For a mostly hidden element, the butler's pantry has an obvious role to play.

"Additional bench and storage space are their main advantage," says Alex. "Being able to shift miscellaneous appliances into the pantry frees up space in the main section of the kitchen."

They are the perfect dinner party accessory, says Adrian Popple, design director at Met-

ricon.

"You can use a butler's pantry for food preparation and

cooking meals. It is also a great place for dirty dishes," Adrian says.

"The butler's pantry is ideal for storing small appliances out of sight, allowing people to showcase a clean, streamlined and uncluttered kitchen."

Felicity says they are a storage junkie's dream home addition.

"This is where a mini bar fridge and bulk-purchase food items can be stored," she says.

Planning the perfect pantry

"A walk-in pantry is traditionally a series of shelving sectioned up from floor to ceiling to allow for food and drink storage," says Alex Roth.

"A butler's pantry also provides bench space to cook on, sinks to wash dishes in, dishwashers and other appliances like ovens or fridges. It's a mini kitchen within a kitchen."

But it can be simple to turn a standard walk-in pantry into a butler's pantry.

"You have the space and the core shelving there," Alex says.

"I would suggest removing

or rearranging the shelves to allow for a more traditional cooking bench with enough clearance for appliances such as microwaves or wine fridges."

Everything and the kitchen sink

"They have the potential to be

very large and packed to the brim with appliances," says Alex.

"Sometimes they can turn into the real kitchen, with the 'main kitchen' just a facade to fit into the rest of the house."

Adrian says the sky's the limit when it comes to innovative butler's pantries.

"They will continue to be a popular trend with secondary cooktop appliances in these spaces," he says.

"Other emerging trends are elevated wall oven towers and integrated appliances that create a seamless look across the entire kitchen."

Felicity says it's up to you to decide just how elaborate your butler's pantry becomes.

"It can be as luxe as you like, if you're prepared to splash the extra cash," she says.



Photo: Cameron Kimber Design



Townsville Bulletin
Wednesday 8/08/2018

Page: 31
Section: General News
Region: Townsville QLD, AU
Circulation: 16484
Type: Regional
Size: 573.00 sq.cms.



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HIDDEN LUXURY: A butler's pantry provides extra storage and workspace.

Photo: Alex Roth