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Black and beautiful

This dramatic kitchen in a high-spec yet modest holiday home downplays its role as a workspace visually yet still provides a sculptural focal point

Designing a kitchen for a compact holiday home requires addressing some key factors – for example, if it’s part of an open-plan living area it may need to visually downplay its practical use. And, given a getaway’s often limited floor space, multipurpose functionality is also a plus.

Architect Evelyn McNamara designed this home and the kitchen in it as a movable feast – a design that could work in any scenic location. The prototype nestles in a grove of tree ferns.

The house has solid end walls for privacy and long glass-clad side walls to stay close to nature. The central kitchen, bathroom and laundry pod

is effectively a rectangle within a rectangle – with corridors leading down the sides of the pod to two bedrooms at the back, says McNamara.

“Given the modest size of this living and kitchen volume, I wanted the kitchen to recede visually and add a sense of depth to the space.”

To this end, most elements are black. The cabinetry fronts are black-stained chipboard, and the island waterfall benchtop and carcass are in black Corian, while the island’s knee recess is in black cedar – a continuation of its use on the exterior cladding and interior end walls. Black, backpainted glass forms the splashback.

Previous pages: This kitchen looks modest in size but is actually 1.5m wide. The black cabinetry, splashback and benchtop surfaces bring depth to the open-plan space.

Above left and top: Versatile agenda – the free-standing wood table looks like an extension of the island’s worksurface but it can also be relocated and used as a dining table.

Above: Black Corian waterfall edges on the island add a glossy feature.



Architect: Evelyn McNamara, Evelyn McNamara Architecture
Cabinetry: Strandboard, black stain and clear sealed
Cabinetry hardware: Fabulous Kitchens
Benchtops: Corian, Black Nocturne, by Topline Benches
Flooring: White lacquered plywood
Lighting: Tuba LED tracklight from Inlite
Splashback: Backpainted Etchlite glass from Global Glass
Sink: Pre-formed in Corian by Topline Benches
Taps: Arne Jacobsen Vola tap from Metrix
Oven: Fisher & Paykel 900mm Gas on Glass
Cooktop: Fisher & Paykel 900mm Pyrolytic oven
Ventilation: Fisher & Paykel 900mm Powerpack Rangehood
Refrigeration: Fisher & Paykel
Dishwasher: Fisher & Paykel DishDrawer

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Top right: Seen up close, the textural nature of the stained chipboard is more apparent. This surface and the black-stained cedar used on the front of the island, the interior end walls of the holiday home, and as the entire external cladding, all call to mind the texture of tree fern trunks outside.

Above right: Despite being a modest-sized home, all fittings and fixtures are high-specification – this elegant gooseneck tap is a case in point.

While the uniform use of black downplays the kitchen’s functional operation, it does give the design a dramatic sculptural presence.

“I set the island closer to the cabinetry than usual, so the island doesn’t float into the lounge area in visual terms,” says the designer. And in relation to this, we also stepped the upper perimeter cabinets back from the rear benchtop to allow more headroom and space for the chef.

“The kitchen never looks cluttered, either, as we included plenty of drawers and cupboards to avoid mess being left on the countertops.”

While the kitchen looks compact, in reality

it is a generous 4.7m long – ensuring plenty of room for pantry storage.

Another feature of the design is its sheer flexibility. The free-standing table can be moved out into the room for dinner parties or remain where it is as an extended worksurface to the island benchtop. A stored television can be placed on the table for viewing, too, and the black kitchen offers the ideal backdrop for watching this.”

“The kitchen has an emphasis on texture, as well. The black, slightly rough chipboard and band-sawn cedar evoke the feel and tone of the surrounding tree fern trunks,” McNamara says.