



Expert Opinion

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When considering an island, you need to think about how you and your family will use the room. A retired couple will have different usage requirements to a family with a number of young children.

Size is very important – what will work best in your space. You need to allow a comfortable distance right around the island, allowing for the traffic that flows through a kitchen/living area. An island that is too large for the space dominates the room, while one that's too small will look insignificant, and somewhat of an afterthought.

The traditional kitchen island has evolved from being predominantly a food prepping area with stool height dining, to now being an all encompassing kitchen in itself. It's used for everything from entertaining, cooking, baking, prepping, homework, eating, reading etc. Designs can now include sinks, hobs, downdraft extractors, wine coolers, dishwashers, hidden electrical power provision and numerous clever storage solutions.

The choice of work surface materials has also progressed, recognising the changing dynamic of the island. A mix of materials can often be used, combining stone and wood for example, making a design statement while enabling the durable qualities of the materials to be most appropriately utilised, depending on the primary usage of each area of the surface space.

We would recommend that you discuss in depth how you envisage your kitchen will be used with your designer. By gaining an insight into your lifestyle: if you enjoy to cook, entertain or have young children using the island as a designated

breakfast or homework area, your designer will be more informed to offer practical solutions on worktop choices, proportion of free work space or the addition of an extra seating area

A key trend in recent times has been to introduce a second colour for the island cabinetry, making it a real focal point in the room. By choosing light tones for the surrounding kitchen units and a dark colour for the island, a real contrast can be created, while still maintaining a bright fresh feel in the room.

The inclusion of an island in a kitchen design also gives your designer the opportunity to do something different, making your kitchen truly bespoke. Alternative design features can include curved doors, unique work surfaces shapes and integrated low level dining areas, while the advent of efficient downdraft extractors negates from compromising the integrity of the kitchen design by having a ceiling mounted extractor extending downwards over the island.

Here at O'Connors we specialise in full bespoke designs. Manufacturing all elements of the

kitchen on site in Drumleck, facilitates us to design an island to your specification, including size, shape and materials used for the work surfaces and internal detailing.

A top tip or recommendation if an island is on your kitchen wish list, consult with your designer from the start of the overall project. It can be more costly and problematic if pipes or windows are already in place which could limit the option of an extractor, sink or cooking facilities on the island. Your kitchen designer will also work out the best area for the island to sit in the room, and recommend any structural changes that should be made to enable the space to be best utilised.

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