

# KITCHENS BEDROOMS & BATHROOMS

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### COVER STORY

*"The most important  
thing was for the  
kitchen to be well  
connected to the  
garden and patio"*





# *You're* INVITED

From dinner parties, cocktail soirées, and family roasts to eating alfresco with the help of their outdoor kitchen – there's always a gathering of some kind round Robert and Rebecca Bennett's newly extended home

Words: Georgina Townshend Photography: Nick Smith Photography



After waiting patiently for a house to come on the market in a sought-after sea-view street in Westgate-on-Sea, Kent, Robert and Rebecca Bennett finally found 'the one' and purchased the detached 1930s property at auction - despite its dilapidated state, which included a tree growing out of the existing conservatory and up into the loft. "We think it had been empty for around 12 to 13 years," Robert explains. "And even before that it hadn't been touched since the

1960s." The pair spent a year doing necessary repairs, remaining in their old home until the new house was liveable. It would be around seven years later that they completed the property's vast remodel with the help of architect Tony Michael at Tony Michael Consulting. The works consisted of a 10m-wide x 4m-deep rear as well as a single-storey side extension plus a loft conversion, which took the house up to four bedrooms. As part of the project,

internal walls were also knocked down to create a large, open-plan kitchen-diner-living area. "The whole of the exterior wall was taken out and a large 10m steel beam craned in," Robert says. "We always knew we wanted open-plan and an indoor-outdoor link, as our life is all about entertaining - we made the designers laugh when we told them wherever we live is known as the party house." **Architect** Tony Michael Consulting; **kitchen design** McCarron & Co. ▶

## THE FACTS

**Who?** Robert and Rebecca Bennett with their two children Ryan and Rachel, as well as their bearded dragon Bob

**What?** A rear plus side single-storey extension to create an open-plan kitchen-diner, along with an outdoor kitchen

**Where?** Westgate-on-Sea, Kent

**Cost?** £120,000

**Time?** Six months



Although Robert and Rebecca required an open-plan design, they also wanted to create very distinct zones including a dining, cooking, and snug area. After shopping around, the couple picked McCarron & Co for their kitchen. "They understood our needs as a family, creating something around our lifestyle. We were especially impressed with the long island – made from Calacatta Statuario, a durable, manmade material that doesn't stain – and the fact that they managed to fit in a large dining table, too. It's the perfect size, as we usually host around 10 to 12 guests every weekend – for anything from a roast and having summer barbecues to dinner parties." **Handles**, Ged Kennet; **glass pendants**, for similar, try Swoon; **hob**, Wolf; **worktop**, P Challen.

### Robert Jackson, McCarron & Co: project lowdown

"The house was being extended to create a spacious kitchen-diner, as Robert and Rebecca love to entertain family and friends throughout the year – especially at Christmas – so a huge table to sit 12 was key. Originally, the scheme was planned to be on the opposite side of the room, but I had a large number of Sub Zero and Wolf products to accommodate so I moved the table to sit along the sliding glass doors leading to the garden and designed a long island forming a galley-style layout running down the opposite wall. This creates three areas – the kitchen with the amazing appliances,

the family area with sofas, and the dining area. By moving everything to the other side, I also created more space for the units. It's great to have friends and family all in one room, but the island is a natural barrier to the cooking, preparation, and cleaning areas so nobody gets in the way. For me, the fabulous space plus all the natural light make this kitchen stand out. Plus the classic style blends together with the modern appliances to really make the room complete. But my favourite part has to be the island. Its size means it serves as a good purpose but also keeps the social aspect of the kitchen in focus."



# DESIGN EDIT



When creating the layout, the island was designed to not only provide a social hub, but also act as a barrier between the cooking area and the entertaining space, further helping to create dedicated zones within the large room. "It's open plan but separate, which is exactly what we were after," says Robert. The dining section has been placed next to the doors to take advantage of the light and the view. "And then, in the summer, all of the glazing opens up and we have that lovely outdoor kitchen next to it as well." **Ovens**, Wolf; **barstools**, for similar, try Lakeland Furniture; **boiling-water tap**, Quooker.



As well as open-plan living, the brief also included two major requirements for the couple. The first: Rebecca was extra-keen on having a walk-in larder to keep dry goods. "The designers at McCarron & Co created one very cleverly in what was the chimney alcove in the old dining room," says Robert. "It's a lovely space - she has a worktop, coffee machine, food blenders, and mixers in there so they're not all out on display. For me, I wanted a wow factor with the appliances, with the fridges and the wine storage unit being a main focal point. The bank of ovens is also fantastic, as well as the hob and the downdraft extractor facing out into the dining room and the snug space - plus, this way you never have got your back to anyone while cooking." **Fridge and wine storage unit**, Sub Zero.

- 1 Northern Unika large clear glass pendant light, £299, Houseology. [houseology.com](http://houseology.com)
- 2 Stone Blue estate emulsion, £46.50 for 2.5 litres, Farrow & Ball. [farrow-ball.com](http://farrow-ball.com)
- 3 iQ700 90cm-wide worktop ventilation extractor in black, £2139, Siemens. [siemens-home.bsh-group.com](http://siemens-home.bsh-group.com)
- 4 Dual-hood five-burner barbecue, £899, John Lewis & Partners. [johnlewis.com](http://johnlewis.com)
- 5 SFP9395X1 Classic 90cm-wide pyrolytic multi-function oven, £1699, Smeg. [smeguk.com](http://smeguk.com)



Robert and Rebecca wanted a classic-contemporary look so went for a traditional Shaker-style door, painted in a Slate blue. "We wanted the kitchen to be timeless. It has to last - this is our forever home and I don't want to be replacing it in five years' time," says Robert. However, the hand-painted finish ensures that if the colour goes out of fashion, they can easily give it a refresh.



"It's the only space that we as a family use in the whole house now, for the entire day. Having it zoned means we are separate, but the open-plan design keeps us all together. My favourite has to be the island, for the pure wow factor when you walk in - we've at some point had 35 people standing round it drinking black sambuca," he laughs. "Did I mention this is called

the party house? I also love the bank of ovens and the walk-in larder, along with the natural light that comes in throughout the day." The flooring and wall paint are in light, neutral colours to add to that ageless feel they were after, tying in nicely with the rest of the house. **Flooring**, for similar, try Fired Earth. **Dining table and chairs**, for similar, try Heal's.





"We had every intention of putting in bi-folds - but as you lose a lot of space outside when they are all open we were persuaded to go for sliding doors instead, so I could have my outdoor kitchen directly off from the dining area," Robert says. "Grey slate fronts match the indoor kitchen, as does the worktop - the same polished concrete as on the dining table - help connect the spaces." **Glazing**, Express Bi-Fold Doors.

"Alfresco cooking is all about getting that indoor-outdoor feel," he says. "As I went for all the Sub Zero Wolf indoor appliances, it was a natural choice to replicate that outside. I've got a sink, two barbecues, a fridge, a bin - even a warming drawer. This is where I store what I'm barbecuing, so I don't have to keep going indoors." The couple use it from March to October and cook "proper" meals. "Would I do it again? In all honesty, no. It is stressful, both financially and personally. But the lovely space we have created wouldn't have been possible otherwise. You have to break a few eggs to make an omelette." **Barbecue**, Wolf; **green barbecue**, The Big Green Egg; **outdoor fridge drawers**, Wolf.

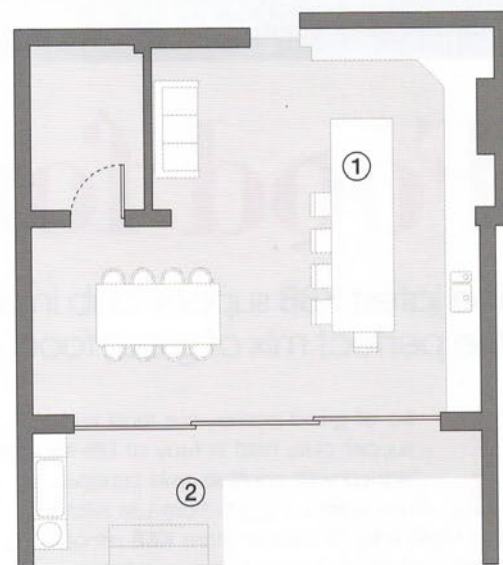


## THE PLANS

Robert and Rebecca created a large kitchen-dining-living space by having a rear single-storey and side extension. As part of the works, they also designed an outdoor kitchen to fit in with their entertaining lifestyle.

**1 Open-plan layout** The large island not only acts as the social hub of the room but also creates a natural barrier between its designated zones.

**2 Alfresco space** The outdoor kitchen includes two barbecues, fridges, and even a warming drawer.



## SOURCE BOOK

**Architect** Tony Michael Consulting  
tonymichaelconsulting.co.uk

**Kitchen Design** McCarron & Co 01380 859299,  
mccarronandco.com

**Ovens** Wolf 020 7858 3480, subzero-wolf.co.uk

**Fridge** Sub Zero 020 7858 3480,  
subzero-wolf.co.uk

**Outdoor Grill** Wolf, as above

**Worktop** P Challen 01903 885000, pchallen.co.uk

**Glazing** Express Bi-Fold Doors 0800 121 480,  
expressbifolds.co.uk

For full stockist information, see page 140 **KBB**