

Essential

December 2010

# KITCHEN BATHROOM BEDROOM

THE ESSENTIAL KITCHEN BATHROOM BEDROOM MAGAZINE LIMITED EDITION COVER £3.75

## WONDERFUL CHRISTMASTIME

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CENTREFOLD SPECIAL

# IT'S BEGINNING TO LOOK LIKE CHRISTMAS

December's ultimate special guest takes a break from his seasonal duties to show us round this stylish kitchen.

PHOTOS DARREN CHUNG WORDS AMELIA THORPE







A hand crafted maple drum cabinet provides an ideal spot to serve drinks and canapés to party guests.

*'We love entertaining and Russell, especially, loves cooking, so we wanted a much larger space with plenty of room for guests to join us.'*









*'I love  
Christmas,  
and Santa  
really does  
exist.'*

FATHER CHRISTMAS

Six-year old Audrey's wildest dreams are realised as she tip tows into the kitchen and discovers none other than Father Christmas enjoying a well deserved sherry and mince pie in the well-appointed, open-plan kitchen.





**I**t may be dark and cold outside, but inside Shermay and Russell Thompson's home, nestled in the Kent countryside, the lamps are burning, the open fire is lit and the fragrance of pine and cinnamon fills the air. 'We always love Christmas at home with a house full of family and friends,' says Shermay.

And this year, the Thompson's have recently completed a major extension to their converted old house, added a brand new

kitchen, and are celebrating its completion with a rather special guest – Father Christmas himself. As six year old daughter, Audrey, dons her angel costume and reads the mince pies, and eight year old son Aidan does his best to stop the Golden Retrievers, Toby and Chelsea, from eating the presents, Shermay tells us the story. 'The old kitchen was tiny and really too small for a house of this size,' she explains. 'We love entertaining and Russell, especially, loves cooking, so we

**Above** The festive scene is set while Santa takes a break at the breakfast bar. Rich tones of the cabinetry give this room a warm, classic elegance, perfect for this time of year.

**Opposite** A beautiful bespoke dresser flanks one wall and makes a statement piece within the open-plan design.

#### DESIGN PROFILE

Elegant Milan cabinetry, designed by Mark Wilkinson OBE, creates this beautiful kitchen. Sections of Black Walnut, finished with clear eco-lacquer, are teamed with painted furniture, and decorated with simple vertical chrome strips and hand stitched chocolate leather handles. Even the Nero Absolute granite worktops are beautifully finished with a double pencil edge detail, while plenty of top-of-the-range appliances complete the deluxe appeal.

**Mark Wilkinson Furniture, 31 High Street, Royal Tunbridge Wells, Kent, TN1 1XL. Tel: 01380 850007. mwf.com. Kitchen prices from £35,000.**





*'I wanted to create something graceful and lithe, just like the haute couture runway models.'*

wanted a much larger space with plenty of room for guests to join us.'

While they drew up plans to extend the kitchen, doubling the size of the room in the process, the couple took a wander through Tunbridge Wells one bank holiday. 'Even though the showroom was closed, we pressed our noses to the window and really liked the furniture on display in Mark Wilkinson's showroom,' smiles Sherma. 'We had seen so many designs which looked very similar, so it was like a breath of fresh air to see the Milan style kitchen. I just knew we wouldn't see anything like it elsewhere.' Hand painted, off-white cabinetry is finished with elegant vertical chrome strips and hand-stitched chocolate leather handles. 'I was inspired by the romance of Milan,' explains Mark Wilkinson OBE of his well considered design. 'I wanted to create something graceful and lithe, just like the runway models and the clothes they wear at the haute couture shows,' he adds.

Kamala Malden, creative designer at Mark Wilkinson's Tunbridge Wells showroom, teamed the hand painted furniture with sections of Black Walnut for added luxury ➤



**Above** Santa shows off his well-honed skills as a master craftsman.

**Right** Classic cream cabinets are teamed with contemporary chocolate and chrome handles, which complement the sleek, dark splashbacks.

**Far right** Integrated top-of-the-range Miele appliances were an essential for this food loving family.

**Opposite** Multiple hobs combine with sleek, streamlined cabinets to create a sophisticated and current kitchen look.







With his work here complete, Santa stands back to admire the beautiful kitchen scene, all set for the exciting Christmas festivities ahead.



*'We might have thirty people in here, but everyone will be welcome.'*

and contrast. The mix of beautiful materials is combined with a large island with a dramatically curved breakfast bar on one side, and maple-topped drum cabinet on the other. 'I planned the room very carefully, to make sure we were able to work around the structural pillars in the room, and also to create a classic design that wouldn't date,' she says.

And it wasn't just the pillars that Kamala had to think about. Explains Shermay, 'Russell chose lots of appliances to help with his cooking. Personally, I love the coffee machine - it's so simple to use, even my daughter could do it!' But multiple ovens, hobs and fridges didn't faze Kamala. 'Right from the start, I planned the room so that the cooking wouldn't get in the way of entertaining,' she explains of the

sweep of work surface which runs around the room, complete with built-in appliances. The island, with bar chairs forms the central focus of the room and a social gathering point.

With Shermay's family arriving any minute from Hong Kong, it's Russell who begins preparing the Christmas meal. 'We make a buffet with lots of dishes - Russell will do the traditional turkey, while I make my favourite Cantonese recipes - we lay it all out on the island so everyone can help themselves. We might have thirty people in here - but everyone will be welcome.' ■

*Tree and all decorations created by Shaftsberrys Flowers, 07905 826326, shaftsberrysflower.com. Tableware and selected food, courtesy of Harrods, harrods.com.*

#### STOCKISTS INFORMATION

##### APPLIANCES

Wolf ICBSO30U/S ovens, £4,253 each; Sub-Zero ICBB1485 fridge/freezer, £9,682; Sub-Zero IC8427G wine storage units, £6,991 each; Sub-Zero IC8424FSG under counter wine storage units, £4,142 each; all at The Westy Group Europe; DG508055 steam oven, £1,900; M826115S microwave, £790; CS13128G barbecue grill, £835; CS1326Y Tepan Yaki, £1,420; KM5993 induction hob, £1,998; CVA50655S coffee machine, £1,994; G12725CVI dishwasher, £990; all at Miele; AW 480 mounted extractor hood, £4,400, at Gaggenau; Boiling water tap, £790, at Quooker.

##### FIXTURES AND FURNISHINGS

Trispray Kubus mixer in chrome, £794, at Franke; 3352W 1½ bowl sink in stainless steel, £554, at Kohler; Nero Absolute worktops, £485 per sq. m, at Mark Wilkinson Furniture. See kitchen profile for details; Seashell Limestone floor tiles, from £30 per sq. m, at Stonehouse; Visona bar stools, £400 each, at Simply Bar Stools. *\*All prices are approximate. For stockists, see page 168.*

#### MARK WILKINSON OBE IS OUR SECRET SANTA

Mark poses up against a hand drawing of the Thompson's kitchen which takes pride of place in their home and is a treasured keepsake. He's been called 'the finest furniture designer of our time' and is the first person in the industry in over 50 years to have received a coveted OBE in this year's honours list. Mark's love of design began at school. 'It was the only thing I got approval for!' he recalls. His creative process has always been a deeply personal one. Mark explains, 'I always try to describe a time, place or mood - as designers, we have a responsibility to create beauty.'

