



# THE PERFECT KITCHEN

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This classical kitchen, with its traditional checkerboard floor, crown moldings, and sleek materiality, embraces both the luxury of space and amenities and the simplicity of the homespun.

## Systems or Custom—or Both?

A great kitchen isn't about perfect performance, but rather about striking an acceptable balance between appearance and utility. In thinking about this, a useful paradigm can be found in the difference between "systems" (or "fitted") and custom kitchens. Regarding the former, there are a number of high-profile European companies that market kitchens composed of prefabricated components, typically of the highest quality and contemporary in style, that can be combined and configured according to your needs and circumstances. Custom kitchens, conversely, are as the term suggests: individually designed and crafted, typically from organic materials, by artisans or studios whose objective is to give you an experience that is soulful, unique, and exquisitely beautiful.

The strengths and shortcomings of each are as you might expect. Systems kitchens tend to be streamlined, highly efficient, minimalist, and almost clinically sleek: they feature no quirks and often no hardware. For a strict modernist, the aesthetic can be ideal. But for traditional—or, more typically, transitional—houses, more warmth is required, and that's where the beauty of custom kitchens shine. Sublimely made from fine raw materials, they tend to be rich in personality and reveal the hand of the artisan. Yet as with any kitchen, the functionality and ultimate success of these bespoke spaces depend largely on the skill of the experts who construct and install them.

As you can imagine, based on what I've expressed thus far, the welcoming qualities of a custom kitchen are, to me, indispensable. At the same time, I'm no different from anyone else—I want water to appear when I turn on the tap and the sink-disposal motor to start grinding away when I throw the switch. Thus, the ideal remains a hybrid of both: the quality and predictable performance of a systems kitchen matched with the warmth and uniqueness of its custom counterpart—infused with a personality that suits your own.

Most of the kitchens in these pages, you will discover, are custom designed and crafted, many of them down to the smallest detail. Yet because they were meticulously composed by architects, decorators, and kitchen consultants (sometimes all three) and executed by skilled contractors and tradespeople, they are also highly functional. I hope that the variety and imagination on display in these pages will inspire you to think, in the most personal terms, about what the perfect kitchen means to you, and to trust that you can fully achieve it.

Marble, marble everywhere, but because it is light in character and color and combined with white lacquer and glass-fronted cabinetry, the eye is drawn to the book-matched panel above the far sink, the room's built-in artwork. The light above the island adds an appealingly unexpected note.





The light-colored millwork and handsomely figured marble combine with a contemporary artwork and stylish black pottery—and the connection to the family room—to make this simple kitchen feel comfortable, youthful, and chic.





ABOVE AND OPPOSITE: As these examples suggest, islands—though they remain essentially utilitarian in character—can evince a high degree of elegance. Moreover, if you install more than one, they serve an architectural function by zoning space.

