

TIME-HONoured SIMPLICITY

Clean design and sound construction make kitchens with a Shaker influence a popular choice

‘Beauty rests on utility,’ is one of the credos of the Shakers, an American religious sect founded in England in the 1700s that developed a unique style of furniture still popular today. The Shakers live in a small, cut-off community and strive for self-sufficiency. This includes building their own houses and furniture. They believe objects should be functional and that ornamentation is deceitful and shows the sin of pride. All work is done for God so it has to be carried out with great thought and care. As a result the pieces they produce are simple, minimal, practical and beautifully constructed. No surprise then that this aesthetic has endured.

Kitchen design is an area where this influence is keenly felt and many kitchen companies include a Shaker-influenced design in their range. Tamsin Collier, design director of Armored explains its appeal: “Shaker style has an elegant, humble simplicity that is beautifully uncomplicated. It gives a true blank canvas that can be dressed up or down, styled traditionally or with a modern edge.”



KITCHEN TABLE

A generous kitchen table creates an inviting, informal atmosphere that suits the unpretentious, homely feel of the Shaker-style kitchen. “When choosing your kitchen table consider your cabinetry and think about what style will suit your scheme best. Opting for a table in a different colour is a lovely way to inject a complementary shade into the space. For a welcoming country feel choose a selection of chairs in different wood, or different shades in a similar palette,” advises Jayne Coleman, designer at John Lewis of Hungerford. Choose chairs that reflect the honesty of hand-turned spindles and carved, saddle-backed chairs, and select woven-tape, rush or solid wooden seats.

Prices for an Artisan kitchen from £25,000 from John Lewis of Hungerford



DOOR FURNITURE

“Order is an important and necessary part of Shaker communal life. Modern shaker kitchens reflect the original philosophy of having a place for everything so things could be easily found,” says Peter Humphrey, design director of Humphrey Munson. “Shaker furniture is beautiful inside and out, so even simple drawers are made with exceptional care and skill.” This solid oak drawer from the company’s Cook’s Pantry, with its hand-carved lettering, is the embodiment of both points, and would make a fine addition to any Shaker-inspired kitchen.

Humphrey Munson Kitchens start at £30,000 (excluding appliances)



RANGE COOKER

A Shaker kitchen should look timeless, so a high-tech cooker is a no-no. Instead, opt for a traditional range cooker. There are plenty of brands to choose from, but look for a design that echoes the Shaker principles of unfussy, functional design. This cast-iron example by Esse is ideal, and gives this kitchen by deVOL a demure focal point.

The Real Shaker Kitchen, from £8,000 (excluding appliances), deVOL ▶



COLOURS

The Shakers either apply a preserving varnish to their furniture, or paint in colours dictated by their sects – yellow, red, light and dark blue and blue green. This free-standing Vermont kitchen by Fired Earth gives the traditional Shaker finishes a modern twist by combining oak and soft greys with touches of blue. “Palettes such as these have a timeless appeal that perfectly suit the clean lines of classic, Shaker-style cabinetry,” explains creative director of Fired Earth Rob Whitaker. For an authentic look consider casein paint, which the Shakers make themselves, and which gives a soft, chalky finish. Earthborn offers a good range.

Free-standing Vermont kitchen from just under £10,000 (excluding appliances), Fired Earth

STORAGE SOLUTION

A Shaker kitchen needs to be free from clutter. Good storage, such as this larder cupboard by Middleton Bespoke, is important. “Our breakfront larder cupboard is a simply styled, substantial but unimposing piece with enough room to store food, crockery and glassware, along with any unsightly items such as food processors or microwaves, in an organised fashion,” explains Jasper Middleton, director of Middleton Bespoke. The last point is important as modern appliances will spoil the ageless Shaker look.

Kitchens start at £25,000 (excluding appliances), Middleton Bespoke ▶





MODEST ACCESSORIES

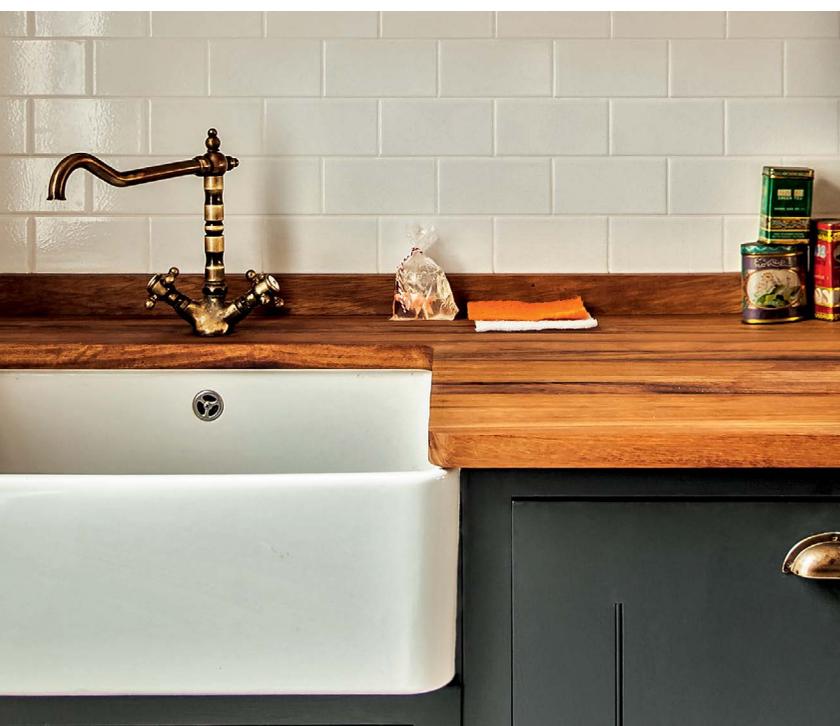
A simple plate rack, such as the one seen in this kitchen by Martin Moore, could certainly not be described as ornamentation. Nevertheless it adds a modest decorative touch, providing interest for the eye without compromising the pleasing simplicity of the kitchen. It is also extremely practical as the plates are easy to store and access. As Richard Moore, design director at Martin Moore asserts: “Keeping china in a plate rack above the sink is both functional and decorative – a perfect illustration of Shaker philosophy.”

Complete kitchens from £40,000, Martin Moore

SUBTLE FIELDING

“If we were to stay utterly true to the Shaker ethos of clean and simple lines, the raised and fielded panel would only be used on the inside of the cabinet door to keep it stable and prevent warping,” notes Tamsin Collier, design director of Armorel. However, she is also quick to point out this style of cabinet door has become a key part of the modern Shaker kitchen (utterly unadorned doors being too severe for today’s taste), and its unassuming good looks are undoubtedly true to the spirit of the Shaker philosophy of design.

Complete kitchens start at £25,000, Armorel



WOODEN WORKTOPS

The Shakers make their furniture exclusively from wood, so a wood worktop is an appropriate choice for this style of kitchen. Authentic choices include maple, cherry or pine, but any timber, including this iroko worktop from British Standard, will provide the same natural look. Wood worktops need some maintenance in the form of regular oiling as a protection from watermarks. Oils are straightforward to apply, but surfaces need recoating every three to six months, depending on usage.

Kitchens start at £7,000 (excluding appliances), British Standard ■