

Super-sized kitchens become cool as home cooking heats up

Julie Power

THE trend to bigger kitchens – some as long as a humpback whale – in houses and apartments is taking off in what some developers call the *MasterChef* phenomenon.

To illustrate the trend, the kitchen design that recently won Kim Duffin this year's kitchen designer of the year award was 18 metres in length.

Only 1 per cent of kitchen renovations reduce the size of a kitchen. In contrast, 53 per cent extend a kitchen, according to a recent report on kitchens and bathrooms by the Housing Industry Association of Australia.

When developers Lend Lease asked buyers what they wanted from a new apartment in Melbourne, 77 per cent rated the kitchen as most important.

Where developers once assumed young singles and couples living in apartments dined out and did not need a big kitchen, today's buyers consider them as the emotional heart and hub of the home.

The kitchen was "king" for many purchasers, said the general manager of development,

apartments, Ben Coughlan, at Lend Lease. "Our customers are telling us that they want a quality kitchen product fit for a chef in their own homes," he said. "This *MasterChef* phenomenon has certainly influenced our kitchen offerings. The kitchen is now the most important room in the apartment, and young professionals are dining at home, and practising the dishes they learned about on television."

To make space for a larger kitchen with room for a breakfast bar or an island table, where families and friends can gather, many apartment designers and home builders are stealing from other areas to create space. Laundries, for example, are often being incorporated in kitchens while living rooms are shrinking in size.

According to the senior director of CBRE Residential Projects Tim Rees smaller apartments that used to have narrow galley kitchens are being redesigned to include a kitchen with somewhere for people to gather. "Now that more people are dining at home, and reality kitchen shows have exploded, a lot more people

at home are doing fine dining."

Buyers and renovators also want storage for the many kitchen appliances they are buying.

Mr Duffin, who has won 54 kitchen awards for his designs for Sublime Architectural Interiors in Brisbane, said many families wanted a kitchen big enough for a dining table so they could eat together. In expensive kitchens, he is including a scullery and a butler's pantry to accommodate the mixing machines, toasters, sandwich presses, steam ovens and microwaves that people want to store out of sight.

His own kitchen in Chapel Hill, Brisbane, the 18-metre design which won this year's Housing Industry Association award, includes a traditional kitchen area at one end and an outdoor kitchen at the other end. It also has two wine fridges and two standard fridges.

"It suited our needs as a family to have dedicated zones, for cooking, food preparation, consumable and non consumable storage. And we wanted to bring the outside in by including the outdoor kitchen."

'The kitchen is now the most important room in the apartment.' **Ben Coughlan, Lend Lease**





Big as a whale ... Kim Duffin, with his wife, Rebecca, won this year's kitchen designer of the year award for his 18-metre-long kitchen in his Brisbane home. Photo: Paul Harris