

A modern kitchen featuring a black island with a white bar stool. The island has a black countertop and a black cabinet below it. On the island, there are several decorative items: a white vase, a stack of black plates, a white vase, an orange vase, and a white vase. A row of colorful cookbooks is also on the island. The kitchen has wooden cabinetry and a white countertop. A window in the background shows a view of greenery. A red stand mixer is on the counter to the right. A television is mounted on the wall to the right.

Selina's dream kitchens

Written by Monica Gwee

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The stuff of dreams

Here are modern kitchens, uniquely designed around the way Singaporeans shop and store food, how they cook varied, ethnic and international meals, and how they entertain at home. Each kitchen is someone's dream come true, where every oversized pot, fancy kitchen gadget and Hello Kitty children's plate has logical storage and easy access in one gorgeous, functional space.

Nothing defines the character of a home more than its heart: the kitchen. And this is not just another kitchen book. This is a book about the evolution of Singapore kitchens and how family life has changed – or not.

I feel fully qualified to write this book because designer Selina Tay of Collective Designs, and her talented construction team at Mudian, designed and built for me the kitchen of my dreams – not once, but three times, in different homes. She turned dark, pokey and cramped spaces into marvellous areas of light and welcome, where good food, family, friends, animals, children and visitors find warmth, delight, companionship and the special bond shared around a meal eaten at home.

Selina Tay's kitchen concepts are rooted in her memory of how Asian parents, such as her mother, though reticent with physical affection, expressed their love unreservedly through food, especially home

cooked food. Those who can remember Singapore kitchens from the 1950s will recall that kitchens were typically "hidden" rooms at the back of the house where only women and servants ventured.

Today's contemporary Singapore kitchens underline the incredible transformation apartment life has brought to a generation who may or may not cook much. Even houses with traditional dry and wet kitchens are now unrecognisable in terms of how much prominence is given to this working area of the home. The kitchen is now a statement feature in many proud homes. Modern appliances and technology have improved indoor ventilation so well, open plan kitchens that flow into living areas are now the most desired lifestyle must-haves.

As a fully satisfied owner of three of Selina's kitchens, I write this book as a gift to all those who understand that a kitchen is more than just a place to boil water for instant noodles. And to those who

have yet to discover the inspiration and joy a well organised and beautiful kitchen can bring to your life, this book is also for you.

The sensational kitchens featured here are all part of entire homes designed, built, reconstructed or renovated by Selina Tay over 10 productive and creative years. A sought after interior architect, Selina designs homes that are much loved by their owners. But I believe her kitchens are extraordinary, precious and memorable experiences she giftwraps personally for each homeowner.

These Singapore kitchens are fabulous spaces where an acute eye for detail, and Selina's own instincts as a serious cook, make just using a microwave to heat up a dish, or preparing a meal for eight from scratch, a treat and a constant delight. These kitchens are a sample of how she has shaped and inspired even non-cooks towards the magic of delicious home cooked meals prepared for loved ones or yourself.

Here are modern kitchens, uniquely designed around the way Singaporeans shop and store food, how they cook varied, ethnic and international meals, and how they entertain at home. Each kitchen is someone's dream come true, where every oversized pot, fancy kitchen gadget and Hello Kitty children's plate has logical storage and easy access in one gorgeous, functional space.

These are kitchens Singapore homeowners can be extremely proud of – beautifully designed, precisely built and happily lived in by those fortunate enough to own a Selina Tay Dream Kitchen. Welcome to the heart of these Singapore homes.

Monica Gwee

Selina Tay

Selina has been restoring and supporting harmonious family life in Singapore through her custom designed kitchens, transforming stark spaces into genuine comfort zones, a refuge for stressed-out urbanites.



After her formal education in Fine Arts, Selina Tay worked briefly with an interior design firm before embarking on an unusual path – an intensive apprenticeship with a carpenter. The hands-on skills she acquired in building furniture, combined with her clear-headed focus on visionary interior design, has cemented her reputation as one of Singapore's premier interior architects. Her company Collective Designs, and its furniture design and construction subsidiary Mudian, has a loyal following among discerning homeowners.

With Selina, a happy home begins with its heart: the kitchen. An avid foodie and cook herself, Selina has been restoring and supporting harmonious family life in Singapore through her custom designed kitchens, transforming stark spaces into genuine comfort zones, a refuge for stressed-out urbanites.

Moving forward, Selina's next focus is integrating more effective home recycling methods for tropical kitchens and using design initiatives to make kitchens and homes more environmentally friendly through sympathetic materials and construction approaches.



Houses

We've come a long way. The “dry” and “wet” kitchen concepts are still alive and well today. Air-conditioning in the modern kitchen relegates deep frying and spicy cooking to well ventilated areas in a “wet” zone closed off from today's open plan dry kitchens, where the “clean” microwave, steam oven and oven reside.

In an older Singapore when houses were more plentiful than high-rise apartments, the kitchen was not a room meant to be seen. It always had a door to close it off, the surfaces were often formica or laminate, and there was never a table for dining in the kitchen. This was the space for women and servants, Milo tins and a food cover shielding leftovers from flies.

What a difference globalisation makes. Now, it is almost unimaginable that the main feature in a Singapore kitchen used to be a wooden cabinet with ventilation slats, its legs raised on stone “cups” filled with water or salt to deter ants. The pots and crockery were stored on the upper shelf and live chickens in the lower compartment.

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The kitchens in these houses are a marvellous marriage of inherited local habits and Western conveniences. Just think: every Singapore kitchen invariably has a rice cooker. And a station for sauces. Wander through these unique Singapore houses and their magnificent kitchens designed for living, cooking and eating.



TOH TUCK CLOSE

Baker's heaven

Make no mistake, a professional baker lives and works here! This haven, designed for a baking teacher, required a major reconstruction of her house. She needed space, and specialised work surfaces, and storage for professional equipment, and baking tools, supplies and confectionary provisions.

The kitchen's main feature is a 1m by 2m black granite counter. Its position, measurements and stone choice were all catered for the baker's teaching needs. The space allows students to observe and the cool granite top is ideal for rolling out pastry dough and for cooling freshly baked items. Mirror cladding beneath the counter adds lightness by reflecting the pale Viva Textura tiles. Unusually, the feature end of this counter is cut at a slant to reduce bulk.

Storage is organised around the baker's priority: easy access to all baking paraphernalia. The design fits in a corner unit, an overhead dish drainer above the sink to save counter space and easy wipe glass clad walls for jotting down notes, recipes and student tips.

The wood selected for cabinets is quarter-cut black oak with a vertical grain to complement the black granite worktops. The dark tone is paired with high gloss white lacquer hanging cabinets.



Organised baking paraphernalia within easy reach around the commercial oven from Ariston.



Ariston hob.



This baking teacher organises her "home kitchen" and her "baker's kitchen" into distinct zones.

How not to go potty. A place for every pot and its cover in deep Blum drawers.



Black granite top for perfect dough preparation.

Mirror clad counter base and stainless steel strip to protect counter from frequent floor washing.



Storage is everything in this working kitchen. The overhead dish drainer rack frees up precious counter space.



The long, U-shaped kitchen is brilliantly organised for the homemaker and her baking classes.

Everything in its place including a commercial oven, small TV, easy wipe glass walls and thoughtful storage.



Viva Textura tiles.

From work kitchen to live-in kitchen

The request from this family was simple. They wanted to live in their kitchen, not just cook in it; they wanted where they ate to be part of their living space. And they needed a huge amount of storage.

Lots of white and glass clad walls instantly add brightness to this formerly dark, isolated kitchen. The glass clad walls also double as easy-wipe and clean surfaces for phone messages and notes to family members. Glass backing under the breakfast counter continues the light, clean theme.

The concept here involves two separate kitchen zones, tied by the L-shaped white Corian® breakfast counter. The original kitchen had a central island, but all the cheerful energy of the family cooks was cut off from the diners in a separate room. The open plan created three logical areas: dining, casual dining and food preparation, and cooking at the back of the kitchen.

The clean, uncluttered space comes courtesy of thoughtful storage including a roomy pull-out drawer pantry and a variety of storage options: some hanging cabinets are flip-top for easy access, and ovens and appliances are all within arm's reach. The breakfast counter houses storage for non-consumables – cutlery, crockery, glassware and utensils.

Pantry storage is organised next to the oven, steam oven, microwave, refrigerator and wine fridge. A hob opposite the stainless steel refrigerator has a powerful De Dietrich hood that ducts cooking smells out of the kitchen. A built-in dishwasher near the sink takes care of party dishes.



Positioning the kitchen into the home, view from dining area into the open plan kitchen.



One easy flow of energy and space with a view of the formal dining room and the living room.



Glass clad walls.

Glass backing under the breakfast counter to prevent scuffing.

Ligne Roset bar stools.

To complement the original marble flooring, a combination of mosaic for texture and homogenous tiles in the kitchen area work visually to contain each logical "zone".

Sleek stainless steel De Dietrich appliances add contemporary edge.



Power hood for ducting out cooking smells.

Soft closing Blum storage drawers are deep and sectioned for interior order.



Easy access built-in pantry.



Hydraulic door swings up and away from space saving dish drainer rack above Franke sinks. Mixer from Hansgrohe.



Well-organised – De Dietrich oven, steam oven and microwave next to built in pantry and loads of storage. This family entertains frequently.

The more, the merrier

This busy, boisterous family of four with three dogs, one parrot and an army of friends and family is Food Central most weekends. The average party comprises 25 people grazing at heaped food platters laid out in the open plan kitchen and dining area and spilling out into the living room and the poolside.

The house was reconstructed and the kitchen was in an advanced stage of re-fitting when a mysterious column, not evident in the plans, emerged at the wall demolition stage. Selina had to re-work the entire kitchen around this pesky column while still maintaining the family's request for a very open, practically seamless kitchen where people cook, eat standing up or sitting down, and continue cooking and eating throughout the house without a time limit.

Because of the regular party crowd size, the flow of wet kitchen into dry kitchen and into the dining area was crucial. The design had to be seamless to allow for constant movement in and out and through, with spatial margins for ferrying hot food among children, dogs, elderly relatives and guests, safely back and forth.

The irritating column prevented the original concept of one long, continuous counter. This was ditched last minute. The column also demanded a physical division between dry and wet kitchens. A 1m high book cabinet topped by black granite was built as a stabilising link to the pillar and creates a natural shelf for a formidable cookbook collection. It also offers additional counter space.

Red gum wood from Australia was used for the cabinet doors with remarkable effect. The carefully matched wood grain and seductive colour threw into relief the white Corian® countertops, the black granite floor and the high gloss white, open-and-slide Pegaso cabinet doors. Capacious storage consisting of individual pull-out drawers hides behind these doors, housing a formidable artillery of gadgets and equipment for professional home cooks.

There is a walk-in pantry for dry goods, three refrigerators (two in the dry kitchen and one in the wet) and a large wine fridge. And because the human traffic tends to blur the living spaces, a huge flat screen TV hangs pride of place on a feature wall flanking the De Dietrich steam oven and microwave.



Natural ventilation from huge windows.



Giant sink and commercial gas hob and oven in the wet kitchen at the back of the house.

The oven in the wet kitchen can roast up to three turkeys or four chickens simultaneously.



Commercial GE fridge and freezer in the wet kitchen.

Liebherr fridge.



Red gum wood panelling adds richness and depth.



Concealed storage for appliances.

De Dietrich steam oven and microwave.

Column with huge flat screen TV.

The kitchen flows into the dining area and out into the living room and the pool. It's one seamless entertaining space spilling into alfresco dining on the edges of the pool.



Making the best of a structural column, a book ledge anchors the column and adds more work space.

Generous work space around the two-level counter.

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Once a dark room hidden away, today's contemporary kitchens are bold, individual lifestyle statements of edgy design, specified function and deep pride. Step into 28 gorgeous kitchens designed and custom built for discerning homeowners in houses, apartments and public housing flats.

Interior architect Selina Tay has been transforming old and new spaces in Singapore, and elsewhere, into gorgeous homes for over two decades. Each stunning tropical kitchen here is uniquely designed around how its owner shops for and stores food, how various cuisines are cooked and served, and how entertaining at home is done.

The detailed pictures will inspire a compelling desire for home comforts and the heartfelt joy of cooking and sharing a meal with loved ones in the luxury of your own dream kitchen.



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