

THE COOK'S



KITCHEN

Food is Emma Knowles' life, and her renovated home in Sydney's eastern suburbs caters to her obsession all day, every day – if she wants

WORDS ELIZA O'HARE PHOTOGRAPHY ANSON SMART STYLING KATE LINCOLN



KITCHEN/DINING AREA Emma in her element. "I wanted a sense of separation without feeling segregated, which is why I chose the half-wall behind the banquette and a couple of steps down to the lounge area," she says. The banquette is upholstered in dusty blue leather from NSW Leather Co. Dining table from Jordan and stools from Sarah Ellison (both discontinued). Bamboo/Paper pendant, House of Orange. Diiva swivel stools, Grazia & Co. Pebble bowl in Pistachio on island, Mud Australia. Butter dish, Cisco & the Sun. Goblets in Bleu et, Maison Balzac. Lulu napkin set in, Oatmeal, Jordan. Rockpool napkins and Fantasia cutlery in Sage on dining table, Bonnie And Neil. Colour vase in Blue, Hay. Sheer curtains, DIY Blinds.

LIVING AREA (opposite) Loom Rugs vintage kilim rug, Koskela.

CHEAT SHEET

Who lives here Emma Knowles, a food stylist, recipe creator and editor; her husband Ed; daughter Ruby, 19; and cats Boo, Bandit and Loki.

Style of home A renovated four-bedroom, semi-detached house built in 1922, under a conservation listing in a heritage area.

Location In Sydney's east, traditional land of the Bidjigal and Gadigal peoples.

🕒 After some preliminary joinery work by P & S Design & Construction, the first part of the renovation commenced in June 2021 and wrapped up that December. Stage two began in March 2022 and was completed in September.

HAIR AND MAKE-UP BY MICHELLE COX USING LA MER, TOM FORD BEAUTY AND ORIBE



Emma Knowles knows her way around a kitchen. With a life devoted to food – she has spent time back-of-house in fine dining restaurants, as a food stylist and food editor, and running her own cafes – it's not any kind of surprise to discover that the kitchen of her family's home in Sydney's eastern suburbs is actually pure joy.

Designed to be the heart of the newly renovated home, this space leads a dual life. It beats with all the pressure and action of a professional kitchen, where Emma works developing recipes for books, magazines, restaurants and clients, sometimes trialling and testing up to 50 dishes a week. But she also flips the space to host casually catered gatherings of friends, who will spill over from her generous island work bench to settle on her bespoke banquettes or down to lounge in the sunken conversation pit at the back. See? Pure joy.

Emma and her husband Ed bought the house after it was passed in at auction, in an adorable street overlaid with a conservation listing in a heritage area of the city's beach suburbs. This may have contributed to the passing-in, but that didn't deter Emma and Ed. After all, the location is golden. The heritage listing did pose a few sticking points in the design process, such as keeping certain walls and materials in the kitchen, but Melissa Bonney of The Designory – whose practice is experienced with Sydney's

heritage challenges – created the solutions that transformed the home and got a fast DA approval. “The way Melissa looks at space is amazing,” says Emma. “We have apartments on all sides and you can stand in this room and not feel their presence at all.”

Above all, Emma wanted the house to be cohesive, so she went for consistency in the fittings and finishes throughout the space, from upstairs down. Perhaps the most powerful tool in the pursuit of harmony was the palette. “I have been a blue girl for years, but I arrived at this particular blue – a really dusty, dirty blue – after a trip to Paris with all of those beautiful faded, old doors and gates,” she says. “It's cool but also warm and rich.”

After looking at the budget, Emma wanted to sound out whether they could actually renovate in two stages, to stagger the finances, with her builder, Brendon Bott of B2 Construction. “He said we could – it would cost more in the long run, but not much more,” she says. “But I think this renovation still wouldn't be done if we'd had to do it all at once.”

There were other budget challenges along the way. The upstairs bathroom vanity bench was planned in Super White Dolomite to match the first round of bathrooms downstairs, but that was put into jeopardy by a 70 per cent materials price increase thanks to Covid. The solution came from Brendon. He had first tried using offcuts and splicing marble pieces together, but suggested using the surplus floor tiles that now stretch from the floor seamlessly up and across the vanity top.

COFFEE CUPS (ABOVE RIGHT), STUDIO ENTI, MEEKA, AUSTRALIAN COTTON TEA TOWELS IN PALE LAKE (OPPOSITE), COUNTRY ROAD

KITCHEN (both pages) Maculato porcelain tiles from Surface Gallery link cabinets in Murobond Tarnished Silver with island cabinets in Porter's Paints Vintage Blue, both topped by Super White Dolomite from Marable. Brave and Archer handles, Linear Standard. Freestanding cooker, Fisher & Paykel. Artworks by Nicole Nelius and (on rear wall) Gabriele Herzog. The drawers beneath the staircase include a charging drawer for devices and an Integrated CoolDrawer from Fisher & Paykel. Integrated French door fridge, also Fisher & Paykel. Custom splashback tiles by Linda Fahey Studio. Sink, Bunnings. Astra Walker tap over sink. Terra O short articulating surface sconce, Marz Designs.



Much of Emma's home is influenced by her hospitality career, and not just the kitchen. "So many of the fine-dining restaurants I cooked at had banquettes or booths, and I remember loving the sense of feeling tucked away but still part of a larger space," she explains about the seating. "A banquette is also a good use of space. It takes up less space than a table with chairs on all sides, which was important here as we were trying to squeeze a lot into a relatively small footprint." There's also storage beneath the bench that runs along the kitchen wall, and deeper cabinets below the bench that run along the half-wall, for extra storage.

"I love the subtle zoning this creates, and when we have friends over for dinner, the light from the huge pendant casts a glow over the banquette area," says Emma. "It feels lovely. It's still connected to what's going on in the kitchen, but with a bit of a room-within-a-room vibe. I also didn't want to be able to see the kitchen from the lounge room. I spend so much time in the kitchen from a work perspective that it's good to have the visual separation when I'm trying to relax."

The kitchen's integrated appliances and cabinetry create a visually calm eyeline, but behind it Emma has indulged in some bespoke additions. A multi-use fridge drawer sits snugly under the stairs and acts as a freezer, a wine fridge or a dry store area. "At the moment it's basically my condiment drawer filled with nuts and pickles," she admits. As well, a double-drawer dishwasher creates cleaning shifts when dealing with a high volume of cookware on busy days, and a silent-pull spice drawer revealing alphabetical jars sits opposite a plumbed-in La Marzocco coffee machine. "For two ex-cafe owners, good coffee is really important, and this machine is also really beautiful," says Emma. But there was one non-negotiable for Ed – a gorgeous reverse osmosis filtration system paired with an alkaline filter.

The island bench has been reserved as a clear space for prep, with no sinks or space-stealers in sight, and has turned out to be one of Emma's favourite elements. "Everyone ends up around the island bench," she says. "It feels so connected, and so social and lovely." So what would be her measure of a successful renovation? "I think it's that we do use all the spaces we've created in the way I thought we would." Job well done. **10**

Follow Emma on Instagram, @emmatknowles. B2 Construction is at b2construction.com.au and The Designory is at the-designory.com.au

DINING AREA (this page, top and bottom) Cane cabinet in Grey, Trit House. Large artwork by Nicole Nelius, smaller artwork by Sophie Bray. Vintage glovelast and cloche, GlobeWest. Marble footed stand, Aura Home. Black Blaze candle. Ferm Living 'Vuelta' ripple glass light, Royal Design. Scalloped planter, Adairs. Husband Ed approves of the specially created space for his substantial record collection. **LIVING AREA** (opposite) Andy modular sofa and glass knot on table, Jordan. Lean floor lamp, Great Dane. Terra O long articulating wall light, Marz Designs. Iosis flannel velvet cushion on armchair, Pepperwhites by Tara Dennis. Burano Peony linen cushion on sofa, Walter G. Emma fashioned the coffee table from a Coco Republic top and some plant pots. "The original iron base was accidentally thrown out in the first stage of renovation," she says. Paper porcelain mug, Hay. Custom outdoor sofa on the background deck by B2 Construction. Stool, Vorsen.



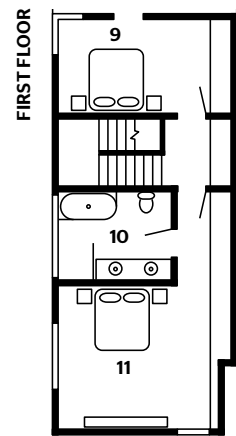
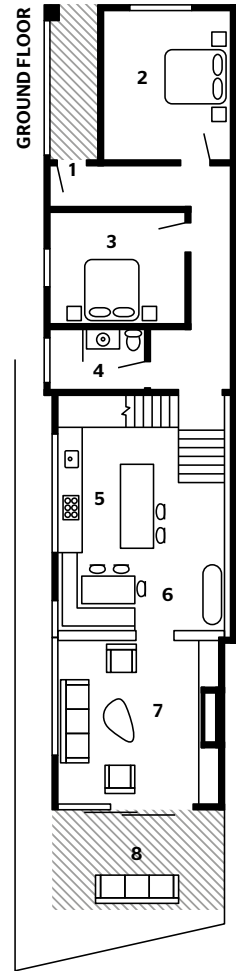
LESSONS LEARNT

"Don't forget to think upwards as well"

EMMA KNOWLES, HOMEOWNER

"My husband's massive record collection needed a place to live, so we went with this tall cupboard with the turntable in the cupboard below. I wish I'd designed a library-style ladder to access the top cabinets. We have to drag out a massive ladder to access the higher ones."

DINOSAUR DESIGNS' BOLD PEARL VASE IN CELESTIAL BLUE ON COFFEE TABLE. JARDAN BOOKS, KINOKUNIYA



- 1 Entry
- 2 Bedroom
- 3 Bedroom
- 4 Bathroom
- 5 Kitchen
- 6 Dining area
- 7 Living area
- 8 Deck
- 9 Bedroom
- 10 Ensuite
- 11 Main bedroom

MAIN BEDROOM (both pages) Emma designed the side wall of cabinets, which was made by Destro Renovations and painted Murobond Tarnished Silver to match the bedroom drawers. Her daughter Ruby upholstered the bedroom nook's benchseat in Mokum 'Infinite' linen from The Fabric Editors. Kauai Oak Celadon and Aswan Azure cushions on benchseat, Walter G. Dawn pendant light, Studio Enti. Bedhead panelling in Laminex 'Surround' panels in Scallop. Compound bedside table, Città. Linen duvet set in Ocean, Carlotta + Gee. Linen Euro pillowcases in Sky, Cultiver. Dot cushion in Tint Light Grey, Hay. Cotton Moss stitch blanket in Oyster, Pepperwhites by Tara Dennis. Slim console, Brosa. Bardwell curtains, Freedom. Artworks by Dylan Jones (above), Leanne Thomas and Mia Green (left, on panelling, from left) and Susie Dureau (opposite). Wire sculpture, Kenya Peterson.

“WE DO USE ALL THE SPACES WE’VE CREATED IN THE WAY I THOUGHT WE WOULD”

EMMA KNOWLES, HOMEOWNER





ARTWORKS BY UNKNOWN ARTISTS

GARDEN (this page) A custom benchseat by B2 Construction is partially masked by a thriving garden design and plantings by Garden Life. "The original frangipanis moved with us from house to house in pots and are finally able to have a place in a garden," says Emma. **ENSUITE** (opposite, top and bottom left) Emma and Destro Renovations combined again for the vanity, which is topped with the same terrazzo tiles used for the flooring. Bijmat wall tiles in Low Tide, Earp Bros. Timberline 'Allure' ceramic basins in Grey, Par taps in Gunmetal and bath, all Sydney Taps. Mirrors, Middle of Nowhere. Wall lights, Beacon Lighting. Disc sconce opposite shower, Robert Gordon. Pure cotton facewasher, pure cotton bath mat and Pucker marble vase, all Pepperwhites by Tara Dennis. Bethell bath towel, Baina. **BEDROOM** (opposite, bottom right) The scalloped effect is a decal from Minnie + Me Interiors. Floral sheet, Adairs. Linen duvet cover in Bluestone, Cultiver. Organic cotton pillowcases in Leaf Stripe and Isla linen throw in Sky, Jardan. Pomponette green vase, Maison Balzac.



GREAT FINDS



1 Terra round wall light in Vanilla Bean & Brushed Brass, \$655, Lighterior. **2** Maculato tile in Bianco Décor, POA, Surface Gallery. **3** Thonet 'S 32 V' chair, POA, Anibou. **4** Bamboo/Paper pendant light, \$1499, House of Orange. **5** melon on blue print by Nicole Nelius, POA. **6** Seascape #18 artwork by Sophie Bray (20.5cm x 31cm), \$480. **7** Borosilicate glass goblets in Bleuët, \$89 for four, Maison Balzac. **8** Pebble bowl in Pistachio, \$170, Mud Australia. **9** Smooth Impasto interior paint in Vintage Blue, \$174 for 4L, Porter's Paints. **10** Super White Dolomite surface, POA, CDK Stone. **11** Aswan Azure linen cushion, \$157, Walter G. **12** Burano Peony linen cushion, \$144, Walter G. **13** Dual fuel 90cm freestanding cooker, \$5499, Fisher & Paykel. **14** Seba single kitchen sink in Brushed Gunmetal, \$62990, ABI Interiors. **15** Icon + sink mixer with swivel spout in Chrome, \$553, Astra Walker. **16** Linen duvet set in Ocean, \$375 for queen, Carlotta + Gee. **17** La Marzocco 'Linea' mini coffee machine, \$8499, Market Lane Coffee. **18** Lionsong Beni M'Rirt rug (313cm x 385cm), \$15,350, Tigmi Trading. **19** Lean floor lamp, \$2300, Great Dane. **20** Alva armchair, \$1599, Sarah Ellison. **21** Mentega ceramic butter box, \$68, Cisco & the Sun. **22** Sklo 'Wrap Knot' object, \$300, Jardan. **23** Column pillar candles in Eucalyptus, \$34 for two, Black Blaze. **24** Cane low cabinet in Natural, \$4260, Trit House.

ADDITIONAL PRODUCT SOURCING: KATE LINCOLN

good news

"I tried to use Australian suppliers for most things, especially lighting, from Studio Enti, Mud Australia and Marz Designs (all female-led businesses)," says Emma. Plans are in place for a solar install, and the layout utilises cross-ventilation, to minimise use of the air-conditioner.

EXTERIOR Emma's original semi-detached home was built just over 100 years ago and is under conservation listing in this part of Sydney's eastern suburbs.

