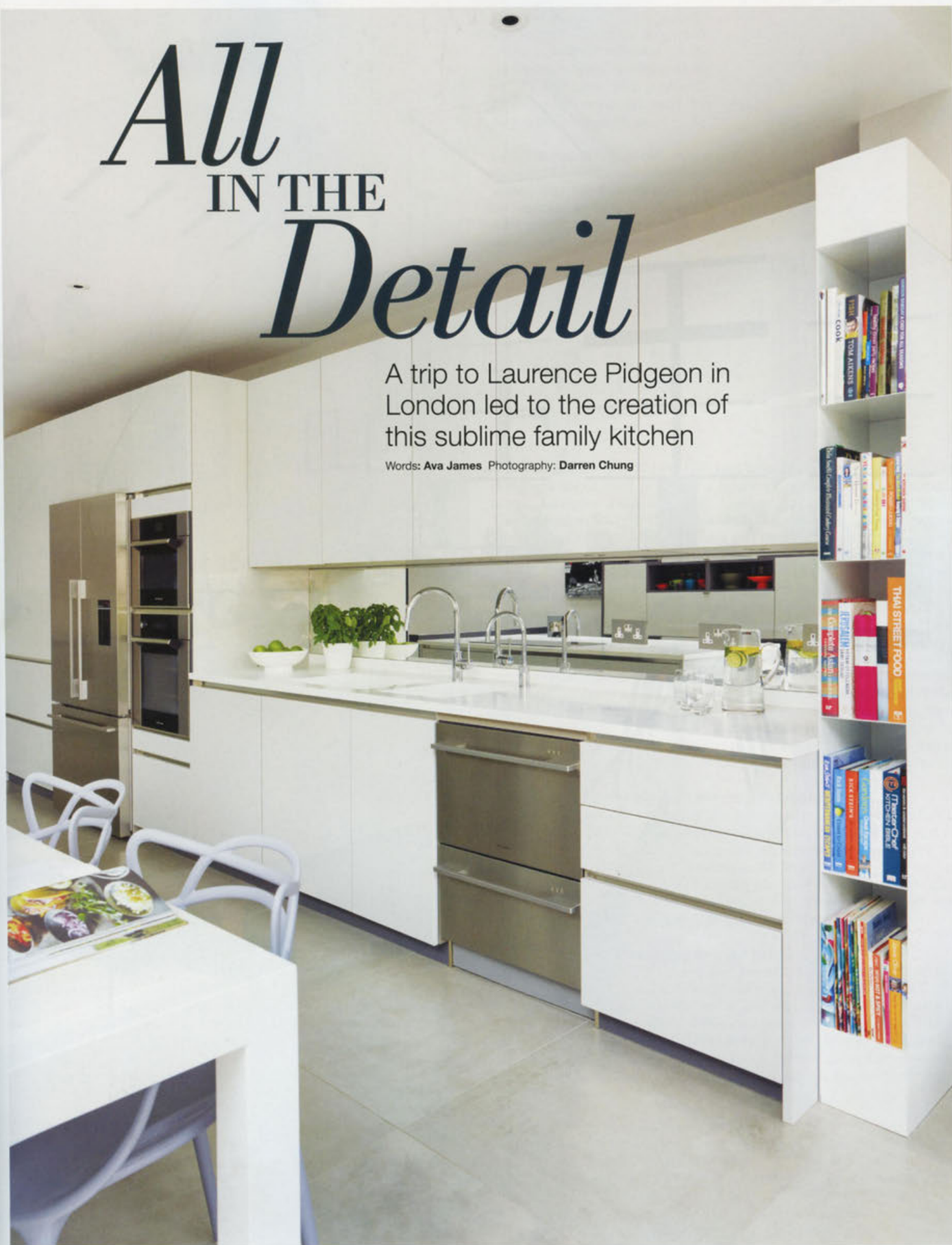


# All IN THE Detail

A trip to Laurence Pidgeon in London led to the creation of this sublime family kitchen

Words: **Ava James** Photography: **Darren Chung**







**Opening page (p137):** "As you enter the kitchen, the glass splashback offers a fantastic reflection of the back garden," says kitchen designer Laurence Pidgeon. Glass is great for bouncing light around the room and adding an illusion of depth.

**Left:** The new extension has created a long kitchen leading to a comfortable seating area that looks out onto the back garden. An extractor sits almost flush to the ceiling so there is no obstruction to the line of sight.

Emily and Robert Hall had already spoken to a handful of designers about their plans for a kitchen extension when they came across Laurence Pidgeon's west London showroom one weekend. Their decision to pop inside for a chat resulted in a contemporary kitchen that's full of clever features and creative touches.

The chance visit, however, worked well for everyone. "They were great clients in the sense that they pretty much knew exactly what they wanted," Laurence recalls. "We just designed the kitchen, drawing by drawing, until we ended up with something that they really liked."

The kitchen extension was part of a complete overhaul of the Halls' house, which Emily and Robert project managed themselves. "We're really pleased with the result, but it was a decision we questioned many times over the course of the work," says Emily. "Educating ourselves on every aspect of the build, while also staying ahead of the builders to ensure they had all the information they needed, was time-consuming. My advice would be to take advice from the experts, or be prepared to dedicate endless hours to the project!" Here, Emily shares her tips on project planning and sourcing products and materials.

#### **What brief did you give to Laurence Pidgeon?**

We wanted clean, contemporary, sleek lines, hence the gloss handleless look with the matt Corian worksurfaces. Given the kitchen is part of an open-plan living space, we didn't want cooking equipment on display or cluttering up the worktops. We love our Quooker tap, as it means we don't need a kettle, and also our drop-down breakfast station, which is built into the freestanding dresser and hides the toaster, coffee machine and juicer as soon as breakfast is over.

#### **Did you make any changes to your brief?**

Our original plans didn't have the raised ceiling at the rear of the kitchen by the garden, but shortly after we started our project I saw something similar at a friend's house and was inspired! The result is a huge success with the drama of the steel-framed windows and the light they bring into the kitchen. Thankfully it didn't delay any aspects of our project as our contractors were focusing on digging the basement first, but we did have to act quickly to submit an amendment to our planning permission.

#### **What ideas did Laurence bring to the table?**

Although we had firm views, they needed to be shaped and refined by someone with expert kitchen knowledge. We therefore relied heavily on Laurence's experience when planning the space to make the kitchen flow – for example the placement of the dishwasher near the dining table for easy clearing. It seems like a small point, but getting that level of detail right makes day-to-day usage a pleasure. When discussing the plans it became clear that Laurence is a keen cook himself, ►





which made his suggestions even more relevant. He was happy to explore different ideas with us and make strong recommendations, like the precision of gas cooking versus the clean lines of induction hobs, dish drawers versus a standard dishwasher and the advantages of a dual-temperature drinks fridge. What's more, he has a good eye. We asked his opinion about the island pendant lights to make sure we got the look right.

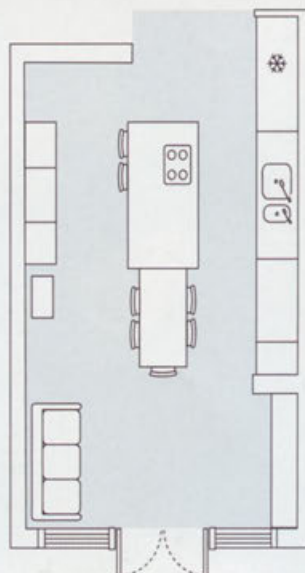
#### **What did you do in the early stages that served you well later on?**

Early and thorough planning was key and definitely reduced stress later on. Before starting work on our kitchen we listed every item in it so that we knew exactly what drawers, cupboards and storage space we would need. Hence, even before the builders had broken ground on our project, we knew precisely where every last item would be.

#### **Are you happy with the final result?**

We love our kitchen! Robert and I often cook together and the space is very comfortable to use, both when it's just the two of us, and also when we are hosting larger dinners where we can still feel part of the conversation while we're putting the finishing touches to the meal or fetching another bottle of wine from the fridge.

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**Above:** To unify the different activity zones within the open-plan space, Emily and Robert specified large-format floor tiles throughout.

**Opposite page:** "We had many discussions about the size of the island and how much dining space it would leave," recalls Laurence. "Emily and Robert wanted a dining table of a particular size, so that figured a lot in our drawings: the measurements of it and how it would look when extended."









## Q&A

**Designer Laurence Pidgeon says...**

### What was the biggest challenge?

It's a large room, and by the time we had made space for a lounge area and a dining table big enough to host dinner parties for eight people or more we had to think carefully about the rest of the space. Having said that, there was nothing untowardly difficult about this kitchen, and the great strength was that Emily and Robert had a pretty good idea what they liked and didn't like, and how they wanted to use the space.

### Were there any U-turns during the project?

There was a lot of evolution and growth, which is something I quite like with a kitchen. For example, we had many conversations with Emily and Robert, but even after the kitchen was fitted, we were still debating how best to incorporate a bookcase at the end of the long run of cabinets. We came up with different drawings showing variations, but in the end they found something that suited them better, so we fitted that for them.

### What's your advice for someone embarking on a similar project?

Spend time talking and thinking about what you want. How do you like to use your kitchen? How does your family like to use the kitchen? You've got to think about it as a long-term prospect, and for that reason we try to steer people towards things that are fashion-proof. My other piece of advice is to sit and talk to someone who knows what they're doing. If the salesman doesn't want to talk, then move on, because all he wants to do is take your money and get his commission.



**Above:** A handleless cabinet design like this one is a simple yet effective way to create a sleek, minimalist look that allows the kitchen to integrate into a bigger space.

**Opposite page:** The raised ceiling in the seating area was a late addition to the brief after Emily spotted a similar feature at a friend's house.