

## **Article for Homelife (March edition)**

### **Buying a New Kitchen**

Choosing a new kitchen is a big decision. It is a costly and a time-consuming process and so it is important to carefully consider what you want in style and function from your kitchen.

If you know the style of kitchen you would like, do you know your budget or how you would like it to be fitted? Depending on whether you prefer it flat pack, rigid, custom built, installed or supply only, you can look for a company that specialises in your chosen kitchen fitting.

First you should look for a reputable kitchen retailer that has permanent display showrooms and provide a full design and installation service. When looking around for your new kitchen, always ensure that you check the background and credentials of a company before you buy.

Ask for examples of previous work and don't be afraid to follow up any available references. Don't just go for the cheapest price with the flashiest advert and make sure that the company can do everything that it claims.

### **Choosing your kitchen**

A quality design kitchen is identified by the quality of its cupboards, worktops, and appliances. You will stand a better chance of purchasing a well-made kitchen if these three elements are of a high standard. Ask what specifications are on offer.

Showrooms are the traditional way to get inspiration and information regarding kitchen installations. You can peruse kitchen displays up close and get an idea of how the fittings might work in your home.

Showrooms also give the opportunity of a good daylight viewing of the different finishes, materials and colour selections. Expect to be served by knowledgeable and experienced staff that will listen to your requirements and advise accordingly.

### **What to ask**

Buying a new kitchen is not just about getting a good price. For peace of mind you need a company that offers great service. When you are considering making this significant purchase, find out important details such as:

- When will payment be required?
- When will it be delivered, and what access will they need?
- How will your kitchen be project managed?
- Ask about the credentials for the fitting team? Have they been vetted and insured?
- When will the installation begin and end?

Ensure that any quote you receive is fully itemised, and check that both you and the installer know what works are to be included in the contract. Re-decorating, plastering, tiling, plumbing and electrics may not be included in the standard 'dry fit' so double check who will be doing this work and plan accordingly.

A dry fit usually comprises:

- Full delivery
- Removal of old kitchen
- Assembly and attachment of cupboards, doors and drawers
- Fitting worktops
- Fitting sink on or near current location

After sales customer service is just as important as the process prior to purchase. A good company offers project management throughout and an inspection service when the fitting has been carried out so that any questions or issues can be quickly sorted. Find out whether this is offered before you sign a contract. Always check the terms and conditions, making sure that the payment terms are understood.

You may be asked to pay a percentage of the total value as a deposit at the point of acceptance or ordering. Ensure that you understand the payment schedule.

- Do I have to pay a deposit at the time of ordering?
- Do I have to pay the balance on delivery?
- Will I have the chance to retain any of the balance until completion?

## **The installation**

Working closely with the kitchen designer will help your plans be fully integrated with their design flair and experience. The designer and the project manager should work with the fitters to ensure smooth running.

Be prepared for unforeseen situations to arise. Due to the scale of work that a new kitchen fitting involves, you will be very lucky if everything goes exactly according to plan. To ease the situation, however, keep clear lines of communication.

An experienced kitchen retailer will be able to identify and address the problems as they occur, either sorting them immediately or detailing future arrangements if that is not possible.

If you have any concerns that are not raised by the supplier, make sure that you draw attention to them yourself as and when they appear, not at the end of the job.

It is general practice that suppliers will request you to sign a completion certificate once the kitchen is fitted, confirming that the job has been carried out in full to satisfaction. If there is anything that is unfinished or you are dissatisfied with, make a note of it on the certificate for further attention.

Finally, take your time – don't rush. You are going to live with your kitchen for a long time. It is the hub of most homes and a gathering place for all the family. It is also a substantial investment in your property, so shop around.

Article written by Mike Alderman of Romerils