



# into the great WIDE OPEN

An effective open-concept kitchen takes careful thought and practical planning

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**t**he open-concept trend is here to stay. Maybe it's because the idea conjures up the notion that your lifestyle will be more enjoyable as everyone gathers together while meals are being prepared?

Whether or not an open-concept design is right for you, however, should be discussed. What are the pros and cons? As with any investment, you should weigh the options before jumping in headlong.

I recently collaborated with an accomplished builder, developer Domenic Poretta of Belpport Homes, on finishing and staging one of his projects. His well-executed, open-concept floor plans begin at the front door and carry

through to the main living area, which, for the majority of home plans, is the kitchen and family room.

## FLOORING

Flooring is one of the most important elements to consider when designing an open-concept space. Because it is the common denominator throughout your entire home, introducing you to each area accordingly, flooring is the most effective way to marry separate living spaces together.

Though hardwood was also an option in this kitchen, a glossy marble tile was chosen in a colour tone similar to the wood so that your eye scans right past the division line.

## APPLIANCES

I like to let the stove or range and the hood take centre-stage in an open-concept kitchen. After all, cooking is the main activity in this space. Remember, too, that when you cook, the smells and particles of your food, oil and so on, will travel. A high-quality hood fan (which is quiet as well as powerful) is an absolute necessity to help move the air outside of the home.

In this space, the fridge and dishwasher were clad with cabinetry panels. Doing so highlights the features in the cabinets and decorative details.

## ISLANDS

Most open-concept kitchens will have an island; it functions as both a workspace and an area to congregate with friends and family. An island should be easy to get around, with an average of 40 inches of free space around the perimeter for traffic flow.

When it serves as a seating area, a minimum 18-inch overhang is required on one or two sides. Islands offer a great way to expand your work surface and add seating too.



*Because the space is always "on show", attention to detail is key in an open-concept kitchen.*



## COUNTERS

In this kitchen, the counters are all at the standard 36-inch height, including the island. I like this for the purpose of providing more counter space; however, you must be decidedly neater in your cooking style since all dishes and tools will be seen from the adjoining spaces.

There is always a compromise when it comes to interior design. In the case of counters, you can choose to have them all at the same level, which provides more useable space, or go with a taller bar height of 42 inches to create a visual barrier from the room beyond.

## BACKSPLASHES

A backsplash offers a great opportunity to add a decorative element to an open-concept kitchen. Plan on choosing a material that shows off the cabinets and coordinates closely with the countertop. In this case, a linear glass mosaic tile in a similar colour to the counter was used, which helped blur

the line between the countertop and back wall, creating the illusion of more depth and space.

## IS OPEN-CONCEPT FOR YOU?

The move to open-concept kitchens is a popular one, and the right one for most families. But if your lifestyle is geared to more formal entertaining (with caterers and a cook), an open-concept plan might not be complementary to your lifestyle.

I personally adore an open-concept kitchen because it brings everyone together. These days, everyone is glued to some kind of technology – the television or a hand-held device. If we can, at least, share the same space, perhaps it will encourage more human interaction!

In order to make an open-concept kitchen a successful lifestyle choice, you should consider your personal needs and habits, and perhaps make a few adjustments. Working with a professional will ensure all the finishes are appropriate and congruent with the rest of the home.



## EVELYN'S TIPS *for designing an* OPEN-CONCEPT KITCHEN

Panel your fridge and dishwasher for visual harmony, especially in a traditional design.

Consider adding glass-fronted cabinets with accent lighting as a decorative element.

Plan for a variety of lighting options and put the overhead fixtures on dimmers. This allows you to control the mood: having all lights on when the engines are firing in the kitchen or dimmed to a candlelight glow when you want the space to recede.

The quality of finishes is paramount in an open-concept kitchen. The finishes will define your home, "sell" your home, and raise the value of your home.

### SOURCES:

**KITCHEN CABINETS:** PDT Woodworking and Cabinetry, 905.677.5888; **CROWN MOULDING:** ParSiena, parsienadesign.com; **LIGHT FIXTURES:** Lando Lighting, landolightingalleries.com; **PAINT:** Para Paints (P5222-44), para.com **BUILDER:** Domenic Poretta, Bellport Homes, bellporthomes.ca.

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