Episode 49: Kitchen Design Essentials

Butler's Pantries and Pantries

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Hello everyone, and welcome to the next episode of Kitchen Design Essentials, the podcast. The season of the podcast of My Forever Home. And today I'm gonna be talking to you about pantries, walk-in pantries, butler's pantries, appliance cupboards because they're all the sorts of things that we need in our kitchen to be able to store food and also to a s- to store lots of our little appliances.

And so this is a question that we get asked a lot in terms of what's the difference between a butler's pantry and a walk-in pantry, and can I get by with an appliance cupboard? What are some of the other solutions that are out there? And look, pantries have definitely come a long way, and there certainly was a period where, having a a double door pantry was really quite a big deal And now it's almost like a walk-in pantry has become one of those must-have features within a home.

And I'd really like to talk about that today as well, because that's not necessarily the case. I think one of the things with a walk-in pantry is, and I'll get to this in a moment, but yeah, it takes up a lot of space. And if you're trying to create a sustainable home or a home that n- doesn't necessarily have a large footprint and you're trying to be really conscious about the size of your home, how many square meters it is, perhaps a walk-in pantry or butler's pantry is not actually going to serve you as much as you think.

And and that you're, able to use that space in a much better way. Some of the walk-in pantries are as large as a bathroom. And is that space gonna be used in a better way for something else? So that's always food for thought. And in, in this session, I am also gonna talk about how do you work out if a walk-in pantry is actually gonna serve you and be the best use of your space, and what other solutions may actually suit you better.

So let's get in. My first thing is: What actually is the difference between a butler's pantry and a walk-in pantry? Firstly, a butler's pantry is effectively what it says. It's a butler's place, which, in days of yore when the wealthy did actually have a butler you would have that as actually a, a place, was a secondary kitchen.

So if you think about it as a secondary kitchen, that is in, is then effectively what it is. So you've got your show kitchen, which, we have today when we do have a walk-in pantry, but the butler's pantry was actually a space where someone could cook and prepare food. These days, a butler's pantry, if you've got a sink in there and you have got the ability to prepare food with not necessarily having to have a stove, an oven, and so forth, then that would really constitute a butler's pantry.

So I think the easy way to think about it is can I prepare food in there? Is there a sink there? Th- there's more in there than just the ability to store food. So that really is a butler's pantry. Most days now, a butler's pantry would just have a sink in it. Sometimes it has a, a dishwasher as well as another oven.

Now this comes up then another consideration and I have this conversation with clients, is the idea of having the main dishwasher in the pantry Or the main oven in the pantry to cr- try and create as much an illusion of less clutter and so forth in the main kitchen. I would really be wary of that as a decision.

I think if it's a secondary dishwasher or it's a secondary oven, that's something quite different, and I've had clients where they've got particularly with some of my clients have got an Indian background. And so they actually have an entire second kitchen because they wanna keep the smells out of the house.

And so it's got everything in there. It seriously is a complete separate kitchen, and then the main kitchen is where they actually serve. But if you are thinking of having just your main k- dishwasher and just your main oven in there as well as just your main fridge, I'd really stay clear of that.

I just think that the functionality of that, you completely lose the flow within your main kitchen if, for example, your dishwasher is in the pantry. It means that you're not easily able to unstack everything from the pantry into the main kitchen, all your crockery. But it's an absolute pain then to have to take everything off the island bench or the bench, and then take it into the walk-in pantry.

I think you're gonna create a lot of work for yourself by having your sole dishwasher in the butler's pantry. I've already gone off-piste by talking about those sorts of things. 'Cause really, at the moment, I'm just trying to define and give you an idea of what those different pantries are. So that's the butler's pantry.

The walk-in pantry is exactly that. It's a walk-in pantry. It won't have a sink in there, but you generally have some sort of prep area. The large walk-in pantries which we're seeing more and more in Australia at least are, they've got a bench space. You've got cabinetry above and below. You've got a splashback area.

But you may not have a sink. The sink is then what's gonna define it as a butler's pantry. You may also then have a fridge in there. I say a second fridge because for those of you who have followed me for a while will know that I- generally would err on having the fridge in the main kitchen area.

But look, I do have clients that swear by having their fridge in the walk-in pantry. They think it's absolutely fine. But that, that's a conversation, I think, for another time, when we were talking about layouts and having the fridge on the end of the the kitchen. So the walk-in pantry, you can store all your food, but it's also a location for you to store your small appliances.

Your toaster, your kettle, maybe your coffee machine your Mixmasters and mixers and blenders and things like that, will generally be stored on the benches in your in your walk-in pantry, and perhaps even your microwave. Then you've got a traditional pantry, which is one that is effectively some cupboards that you may open up.

You can't walk into it, you can't step into it and that's where you would basically store your food. There's not really an opportunity a space to store many appliances. Although I have, in my time been able to design a, cupboard pantry where we've actually then designed a specially designed shelf for the microwave in there too.

So sometimes you could have a pantry where you open it up, and there still might be a bench there at 900 mils off the floor, and you may have a couple of appliances in there, and then you've got the ability to store food underneath and above, where you may actually have that bench. That's one way, and that also then serves as a, an appliance cupboard as well.

It just reduces the amount of food that you can actually store in your pantry. So I'll get to the needs assessment in a moment, but once you've done your your work on what you need to store, and your analysis, you'll then work out whether that's gonna be the right solution for you then there are appliance cupboards, which are exactly that.

They generally sit on the bench. They're designed at bench height. Sometimes they've got a roll door, sometimes they're doors that bi-fold that, that b- bi-fold back. Sometimes you'll have retractable doors that then go back into the wall. Sometimes they're open. And that is really a place where you can put your appliances and then you can basically close the door when that's not in use.

So for example, at breakfast time, you may open that up, have it really open it looks like open shelving, and then after that's all been done, everyone's done their brekkie, you basically close that off again, and it's just some nice clean cabinetry. So that's a really good solution when you may not have the space, or you just don't have the need to have such a big walk-in pantry or the requirement for a walk-in pantry.

The other thing that we design quite a lot are step-in pantries, and they are exactly that. It may be ... it's not really a walk-in, but you may be stepping in. You may be, you've got one step in. We use them a lot we design them a lot, I should say, in ... when we're doing a renovation, and there's the corner.

And sometimes there's been, I don't I've lost count of the amount of renovations we've done where there's been that diagonal pantry in the corner. So it's on an angle, and it's using that corner space and that's your pantry. But- Stuff gets lost at the back and it's not really ideal.

So we generally then, when we're doing the renovation, we'll redesign it, and we'll actually create a step- what I'm calling a step-in pantry in that corner space. So you've still got a bit of bench space. You get the illusion of sort of a walk-in pantry. If you were going to sell-ish the house, it'd probably be called a walk-in pantry by the estate agent.

But it is not really a true walk-in pantry, as in it's very large. But it's a really great way to use that corner space. You don't have any dead corner. You're actually able to put your appliances on the bench there, and again, you've got storage above and below, like the appliance s- pantry I was talking about earlier.

The last one I'm gonna talk about are pantries that are actually pull-out. These were really big in the '80s and '90s, probably more in the '90s. Those p- pull-out pantries. They in reality seem amazing. You've got all that, that wire frame a- around that you can put all your things in there.

I personally don't like them. I- I've been in holiday houses where they've had those pull-in, pull-out pantries, and I just find them painful. You can't actually reach across to what you necessarily want all the time, because there's a whole lot of other stuff there. Things fall over. Generally, the sides aren't high enough to store really tall bottles.

I just find them really impractical. I'm not a fan. However, there are some really well-designed pantry drawers, but you still pull it out as one. It still opens up as one. It's got a door front on it. But there's actually these amazing drawers in there. They pull out, fully extendable. You've got the ability to tailor how everything is going to stand up.

So there's little gadgets in the middle that allow you to create sections where things are stored. And that, that's kitchen h- cabinetry hardware. They're the internals. And they're great, and we're using those more and more when space may be a premium.

There's no real desire or need to have a walk-in pantry. And we've also used them for a client where their walk-in pantry was unable to be closed off, so they needed an area to store food in a very clean and a tidy way. And so that was an absolute fantastic way. So if you're looking at the likes of Blum and He- Blum and Hettich, they generally have those sorts of pantry hardware that enables you to store with these am- the amazing drawers.

But they, they're glass at the front, so you can see everything, and they're high, so things are not gonna fall over. So that's a much better solution in my view than these pull-out wire pull-out pantries. There, there's my view on those pull-out pantries. What we first need to do though is if we're going to do this in such a way that we are going to work out what's best for us, what we need to do is work out what our needs are.

And so this, as I have said throughout this entire season, we need to do a needs assessment or a needs analysis. So we need to work out exactly what you need to store, where are you going to store it, how's it going to be stored? And once we have an understanding of that, we can then actually devise where that ideal storage is going to be.

Do we need a walk-in pantry? How big does it need to be? Where's everything going to go? So- We call that a, a deep dive needs assessment. It's the clear clarity design worksheet that can also help you work out what your needs are. And this is where, where is everything gonna have a place?

And then we can work out, do we need a butler's pantry? Because we are definitely going to store and cook in that space. Is a walk-in pantry going to be sufficient, because we've got a lot of things to store or is an appliance cupboard really going to just be all that we need? We've actually got clients say, "I don't want a big walk-in pantry.

It's just not gonna serve me," which is great. But if you're not sure, the needs assessment and your analysis of exactly what you need, where's it gonna go, how do you cook how many people are gonna be cooking at one time, that's actually gonna help you determine if you need one or not.

Now, sometimes, as I was saying, pantries can be as big as another room, or as big as a bathroom, and can you actually use that space in a better way? So if we are gonna have a butler's pantry or a walk-in pantry, what's the actual setup? I think the number one question we get asked around that is, do I have fronts on the cabinetry?

Now, the whole idea about having a walk-in pantry or a butler's pantry is that this is an area that is for you. You're not really going to be having your guests come over. It's a space where I believe you close the door and everything's in there. You may have, if you're entertaining, you may have all your platters prepared, all your meal, meals and food has been prepared, and it might be sitting on the bench in there.

It may be in the secondary fridge. And so it's an area where you can hide things away. It's not an area that is meant to be exposed. So in my view if you've got a walk-in pantry, butler's pantry, I'm just now gonna call it a walk-in pantry and cover them all off, is it's it doesn't need to be pristine and it doesn't need to be designed in the same way as your kitchen.

Now, there could be, for example, materials that you transfer from the kitchen into the pantry, because you've then that, got that continuity. So for example, the benchtop, the splashback, that may actually be the same. It may also be an opportunity for you to create a different splashback. You might fall in love with another one and you want to create something different in there.

Why not? It may also be an opportunity for you to be able to save a little bit of money and not necessarily transfer whatever benchtop you're having in the kitchen into the walk-in pantry. You may, for example, opt to have then a more cost-effective benchtop item such as a Laminex product. A laminate product.

So with all that in mind, I am a b- a firm believer that the pantry is, doesn't necessarily need to have cupboard fronts. And if you think about it from a functionality perspective, I wanna walk in there and see everything. Now, in my pantry, it's all in Tupperware, so the shelves have been designed to house my Tupperware perfectly.

There are adjustable shelves as well, but they are in a position that I can stack my Tupperware. Now look, I'm a Tupperware fanatic. I've been collecting it since I was 18, so that's a long time so all of my Tupperware is lined up. I can see all my food in one go. I would find it annoying when I'm looking for something when I'm cooking, that I've gotta open all these doors and find what I'm looking for, and I can't see everything in one go.

And I think that's the beauty of a walk-in pantry, that it's all just there, it's visible, it's accessible, and it's easy to get to. So that would be my argument for not having the cabinetry fronts. Now, that is also in line with my belief that your walk-in pantry, going back to everything that I was saying, it's a prep area, it's an area that is really away from your guests, that you need to have a door.

Now, a sliding door is great because it's not gonna take up space within the pantry so that's what I would always opt for. And then, you've got that open generally when your family's there, but when you've got guests over or you wanna keep that space out of view, you basically close the door.

So because you're closing the door, why would you need to have cabinetry fronts on there? You open the door and it's for you to use, it's for you to access. It's not really for your guests to go in there. That's my argument. You've got a door, and then you don't have any cabinetry fronts. Now, if it's not possible to have a door, and there have been instances where we've been designing kitchens and it's not going to work with a door for whatever reason then you really do need to have the fronts on there because it then becomes part of the kitchen, it feels like it's part of the kitchen, and then we're looking at different solutions in terms of how we're going to keep everything accessible, functional, but then also being clean and things can be packed away nice and neatly when we don't have the door to be able to close everything off.

So that's when I would argue that cabinetry fronts are required, and you'll also need a really good solution in terms of how you're gonna store your food in a neat and tidy way. So the other thing that I think so that's my argument for not having draw- door fronts. The downside of that is things do get dusty.

And I also had a client that, she had a really an indoor dog, and she knew that dog was going to go everywhere. Her dog did go everywhere. So he was going to be in the pantry, and she said, "Look, he's gonna brush up against all the things in my pantry." And so even though she did have a door, she understood her lifestyle requirements, and her lifestyle di- dictated that she really needed the cabinetry fronts just to keep the dog hair out of the things that she was storing in there.

And fair enough. That made absolute sense. For me, our dog's not allowed in the kitchen space, so again, I don't need to worry about that. But when they are open, and yes, I do have open cabinetry in my walk-in pantry it does get dusty, so you need to keep that in mind as well. I have consciously

made a decision that I can put up with the dust and clean things, platters and things like that, that I store in there- and as they go, because I would much prefer to have that open and accessibility all the time.

I'm getting food out every day, I'm getting platters out maybe once a month. And that's the other great thing with a pantry, is you can store really long, wide items in your pantry in the adjustable shelves. They generally go underneath the bench. You can store your appliances that you don't use all the time, like juicers or pie makers or sandwich makers.

Whatever it is that you're not using all the time, and again, that will come out in your needs assessment, they can also go underneath. Sometimes you'd stack them vertically, sometimes they might be stacked flat. But I love the fact that I've just got all my platters on shelves and I can access them really easily.

And they're not as easy in drawers, actually. Even though I'm a big fan of drawers, they're actually more easily accessible in a shelf format. The other tip about walk-in pantries is I think it's a really good idea to have a bank of drawers in there. The reason for that is I'm not a big fan of the wire basket drawers.

I think that they create even more dust. They're dirty, they get all, your onion skins and whatever you're gonna store in there, and generally it is fruit and vegetables. But it's it just creates more mess, so I like closed drawers. And the great thing that you can store in those are cans that actually lie down, so you can see all your cans, and they don't get stack- stuck at the back of the cupboard and things like that.

Smaller items, so particularly baking items, your chocolate buttons your cake decorating things. Small things, they are much better off in drawers than on shelves. You might also store your spices in there. Some people like their spices in the kitchen. Some people are happy to have them in the pantry.

So again, that would come out in your needs analysis to work out exactly where they're going to go so it can be designed in the right way Now, the other question that I get asked a lot is sinks. Do we need a sink in a walk-in pantry? I would say yes, if you've got the space. It is really handy. And another thing I would advise is having a window where that sink in as well.

It's the only way you're going to get natural light into the pantry, but it just makes sense. W- the same as when we have a sink in the kitchen, we generally have a window that we can look out. So that's a great thing to have there as well. Now, the reason the sink is so handy in the walk-in pantry, even if you've got a sink almost next to it in the kitchen, is again, it's a space where you can close the door.

So if you are entertaining, you've got a big party or a dinner party, whatever it is, it's a really good dumping ground to put all your dishes in there rather than having them all over the kitchen. So it's

keeping things nice and neat. And the other thing is, it's, ... If you've got your coffee machine in there or you're baking in your pantry, it's really good to have running water.

And for those of you who think I'm not really going to use it," if you are going to, again, it comes out of the needs assessment. If you are going to be preparing food in there, preparing your coffee in there, anything like that, the sink is really, having running water in your pantry is really helpful Now, we spoke about having a door on the pantry and why that's so important.

I- the whole idea is to close everything off so why wouldn't you have the door? And there's only really s- really few design schemes where it's really not possible. It's one of the number one things that I'm always putting in when I'm doing a floor plan sanity check. Now, in re- in, we've al- and we've spoken about materials.

Now, the other thing is your splashback doesn't need to be in, as high in there. You, it's not really a splashback for regulatory requirements, i.e. you're cooking and so forth. It's really just there so that you've got a space between the bench and the overhead cabinetry so that you're not actually going to bump your head.

So there's no reason why that splashback can't be, 500 instead of 6 or 700 like it will be in the kitchen to meet building regulations. And that then will mean that your overhead cabinetry is a little bit lower. You can get a little bit more in, but it's more accessible to get some of the the higher items.

So that is pantries, butler's pantries, appliance cupboards, step-in pantries traditional cupboard pantries that, that is it for today. I hope that's given you lots of I trust that it's given you lots of insightful information and really good food for thought. But again, I go back to, you can't really design something until you know what you need.

The functionality, your lifestyle, how you cook, how you prepare food, how you're gonna use the space, that's going to drive the design. Just putting it in for the sake of it is not driving the design. It's just doing that, putting it in for the sake of it. And I'm trying to alleviate you just putting stuff in for the sake of it.

But really, the design is being driven by your needs and the functionality that you need. So keep that in mind. Of course, this is being released on Wednesday. Friday on the 11th of September, for those of you who are catching it at that time. You may be replaying this two years later. But the 11th of September, 2020 is the release of the Beautiful Kitchen Design Made Easy short course.

That's going to be launching on the 11th, which is very exciting, so stay tuned. Join the wait list, because there is a very special offer for those, or there's a special gift, actually, for those that actually sign up as part of the wait list. No one else will have access to that, so that's a great reason to sign up for the wait list, which is at White Pebble Interior whitepebbleinteriors.com.au under courses.

You'll see where you can actually go and sign up for the Beautiful Kitchen Design Made Easy. So I will also be Forever Home Live at 9:30 on Friday, as always. That will be a very special edition, where I'm going to be talking about my number one top tip. I do talk about it every now and again, but I really wanna go into this tip in a lot more detail on Friday.

And and then I'll also ha- be having a Q&A, any questions that you may have about the course what's in, and I'll do a little bit of a run-through as well. So join me on 9:30 on Friday for the Forever Home Live. Live and interactive White Pebble Interiors on Instagram, Your Forever Home on Facebook.

All right. So I will see you on Friday. Otherwise, we'll be here next week. Very special guest next week from Reece which is fabulous. We're going to be talking about taps and sinks. And not all taps and sinks are alike, and I'm gonna be talking with Trisha around what some of the ... What you need to look out for when you're choosing a kitchen sink and a kitchen tap, and what some of the reasons are for maybe investing in those areas.

So that's gonna be an awesome one so don't miss next week. All right, everyone. Bye for now.

END OF TRANSCRIPT

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