

A huge, bespoke extractor was the unusual starting point for Shaila Chanrai's new kitchen, but it was Halcyon Interiors' mix of materials and attention to detail that pulled the look together

Words **Amelia Thorpe** Pictures **Rowland Roques-O'Neil**

THE HIGH LIFE

An extraction system may not top every homeowner's kitchen wish list, but it did Shaila Chanrai's. "I really liked the idea of having a super-long extractor," she explains. "I had seen a picture in a magazine and liked its semi-industrial and very modern look. Plus, we often do some heavy-duty cooking in our kitchen, and I wanted to be able to do it without setting off every smoke alarm in the house."

For Shaila and husband Subodh, the new kitchen was all part of a project to renovate the listed house they had just bought to share with children Hansika, 13,

Vishant, 10, and Anushka, nine. "We wanted a kitchen we could eat in with the children – somewhere that would be functional for family life, but a pleasure to be in," she says. "We do lots of cooking for family meals, for friends, and the children love to bake. And once a month we cook 100 meals for the homeless, so our kitchen gets plenty of use."

While they undertook work across the house – "No one had touched it for about 60 years," reveals Shaila, "so we had to totally gut the place and start again" – the kitchen demanded particular attention.

The super-long bespoke extractor hood by Westin Design adds a semi-professional feel to this family kitchen

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Shaila Chanrai

A glass dining table enhances the light appeal of the room

"It was a galley-style room on the first floor, which was far too small, so we decided to build an extension at the rear of the house and move the kitchen to the ground floor, where there would be much more room," she explains.

With the building underway, Shaila and Subodh set off to visit kitchen dealers. "We went just about everywhere, but we couldn't find anything we really liked." Until, that is, they met sales director and

designer Ashley Collins of Halcyon Interiors.

"Ashley put in the time with us, which made all the difference," says Shaila. "I could see the furniture was good quality and the prices competitive, but it was the way he listened to what we wanted that clinched it."

While simple, white, handleless furniture was the order of the day, in keeping with the contemporary feel of the extension, Ashley suggested mixing in other materials to soften the overall look. Wall units

in a Quartz Grey oak-effect finish and rich Sapphire Brown granite worktops provide a warm contrast to the white lacquer, while the rough-hewn, chiselled edges of the granite add a rustic feel. "I love modern design, but, for me, it works especially well when you add in some antiques or more organic finishes, like this, to create a more individual look," says Shaila.

Tall units on the rear wall house appliances and provide lots of storage space, while their length is matched by the peninsula cooking zone and the super-long extractor above. It is designed to create the neatest possible working area, overlooking the dining table, so Shaila can chat to the children and friends while cooking. "Everything is in easy reach," explains Ashley of the design. "It's easy to grab vegetables from the fridge, prep them at the sink and cook them on the hob, all within a few steps."

When it came to the extractor, Ashley approached Westin Design, the only manufacturer he thought likely to be able to produce the bespoke design he had in mind. At 3.6m long and 60cm deep, with an offset chimney section, it was an engineering challenge, not least because the size and weight of the hood required a special ceiling support system to hold it in place, achieved by screw-in rods. "We worked closely with Westin to make sure the lights were in the right place, the ducting arrangements worked and the internal motor was sufficiently powerful, given the length of the duct run and the number of bends," explains Ashley.

At night, the lights on the extractor create a soft, evening mood, while LEDs below the Quartz Grey wall units give the cabinetry a floating appearance. "It's a room that feels modern and elegant, but with character," says Shaila. "It's not so perfect that you feel you'll muck it all up if you so much as make a sandwich: it's a room that feels good to live in."

My challenge has been to introduce the brand to the wider market and to target top-end kitchen suppliers

Ann Phillips, sales and marketing manager, Westin Design



business profile

Westin Design

Who are we? Ann Phillips, sales and marketing manager

Where are we? Phoenix Mills, Leeds Road, Huddersfield, West Yorkshire HD1 6NG. Tel: 01484 421 585.

www.westin.co.uk

Business history Walter Stanley Westin started the company as an electrical rewinding business in 1921 in an old mill in Huddersfield. It was subsequently run by his sons, Cyril and Derek, and specialised in producing decorative metalwork for fireplaces. John Eastwood bought the company about 18 years ago and, together with then MD John Reed, decided to focus the Westin business on extraction – though it was only about three years ago the company stopped producing fireplaces altogether. Eastwood continues to own the business today. MD Ian Sheppard joined the company in January, taking over after Reed retired. Sales and marketing manager Ann Phillips, 51, says her original remit was to double the company's turnover. Having joined the company only four years ago, she expects to achieve that target next year, predicting revenues of £3.5m. "Westin was very much an engineer- and manufacturing-led

company, so my challenge has been to introduce the brand to the wider market and to target top-end kitchen suppliers," she says. Westin offers standard hoods and built-in units, custom hoods and built-in units, panels, splashbacks and fan options, plus own-brand lines. Most hoods are made in the company's 22,000 sq ft factory in Huddersfield. Designs are produced at its on-site design studio, which opened in September

Staffing levels There are 36 employees

Favourite aspect of job "I get to wander around beautiful homes advising people on extraction," says Phillips

Least favourite aspect of job "Getting up before I even go to sleep"

Strange but true "We have done an extraction system with an 80-metre duct run before now. It did need four fans in sequence along the duct run to get the power required, but it worked"



Dornbracht's Meta.02 two-hole mixer with rinsing spray set tops a square-edged BlancoClaron 700-U sink



The streamlined working zone features handleless drawers and cupboards and specially made handles to pull open the integrated fridge and freezer

client profile

Name Shaila and Subodh Chanrai

Location North London

Client wish list A contemporary kitchen with warmth and character, designed for family life

Problems "I was concerned the access to the finger recess of the drawers, below the rough-hewn granite worktop, would be limited - and that you might scrape your knuckles every time you tried," says Ashley

Solutions "We were able to specially taper the edge of the worktop, so it's easy to open the drawers without damaging your hands"



The 60mm-thick Sapphire Brown granite worktop and side panels have chiselled profiles with a tapered edge so it's easy to reach the finger-pull for the drawers



A stainless steel roller shutter conceals the tea- and coffee-making station and Glacier White Corian shelf



The peninsula zones the working area of the kitchen from the dining area

product specification

Furniture Alnostar Highline white high-gloss lacquer; Alnoplan Quartz Grey oak-effect wall units with Aluminium Silver plinths, both Halcyon Interiors. Tel: 0207 486 3080. www.halcyon-interiors.co.uk

Appliances Bespoke extractor hood, Westin Design. Tel: 01484 421 585. www.westin.co.uk BO 250 oven; BM 211 microwave; BF 263 lift-up door; WS 221 warming drawer; similar KG 491 gas hob; RC 472 integrated fridge; RF 461 integrated freezer; DF 260 integrated dishwasher, all Gaggenau. Tel: 0844 892 8929. www.gaggenau.co.uk

Sink and tap Meta.02 two-hole mixer in Platinum Matt with rinsing spray set, Dornbracht. Tel: 02476 717 129. www.dornbracht.com BlancoClaron 700-U sink, Blanco. Tel: 0844 912 0108. www.blanco.co.uk

Worktops Sapphire Brown granite; Corian Glacier White shelf, both Halcyon Interiors. Tel: 0207 486 3080. www.halcyon-interiors.co.uk



The five-burner Gaggenau gas hob, with the powerful Westin Design extractor above



Wall-hung Alnoplan units in a Quartz Grey oak-effect finish appear to float



Alnostar Natureline units in Wild Oak are contrasted by wall cupboards in Alnostar Highline Stone Grey lacquer and a bespoke Westin hood, which sit above a Silestone Blanco Rivers worktop and a Miele induction hob. The island worktop is SteelArt by Blanco



Alnosign furniture in Quartz Grey lacquer with the Schoon island hood by Westin



Alnosilk in Magnolia White matt laminate with Silestone Tigris Sand worktops, Gaggenau appliances and a Westin ceiling hood



An Alnoart Stoneglas island, which features images of stone behind glass, trimmed in aluminium and topped with Lechner Glass Mezzo in a bespoke heather colour. The Violet tall units behind are from the Alnostar Fine collection



Dornbracht's Lot tap in Blanco partners a BlancoClaron 700-U sink, part of the Alnoart Stoneglas island display



Sales director Ashley Collins, left, and showroom manager Graham Robinson outside Halcyon Interiors' Alno Store on Wigmore Street in central London

retailer profile

Halcyon Interiors

Who are we? Graham Robinson, showroom manager, and Ashley Collins, sales director

Where are we? The Alno Store, 120 Wigmore Street, London W1U 3LS. Tel: 0207 486 3080. Also at 509 Uxbridge Road, Hatch End, Pinner, Middlesex HA5 4JS. www.halcyon-interiors.co.uk

What we do Alno kitchen specialist

Business history Founded by directors Stephen and Susan Gobel in 1981, the business is still owned and run by the couple today. The first showroom was set up in Pinner, Middlesex, where it remains; the second showroom, on Wigmore Street, opened six years ago when German kitchen manufacturer Alno chose Halcyon Interiors to run its flagship UK store. Alno continue to use the store for events and training, while Halcyon runs the retail business.

Showroom manager Graham Robinson, 35, has worked at The Alno Store for six years, having previously worked as the manager of larger electricals and fitted kitchens at Peter Jones in Sloane Square. Sales director Ashley Collins, 40, worked for Robert Dyas for 10 years when it had a kitchen retail business, before joining Halcyon 13 years ago. Appliances are by Miele, Gaggenau, Siemens, Barazza, Sub-Zero, Wolf, Elica and Westin. Sinks and taps are by Blanco and Dornbracht

Sales stats "We produced about 134 kitchens last year and expect to do the same this year," says Graham. Turnover in 2010 for the two stores was about £3m. Sales are 70% retail, 30% architects, property developers and specifiers. Kitchen prices start at £24,000, including appliances and worktops. They average £32,000; the most expensive to date was £94,000

Staffing levels There are 11 employees split across the two sites

Favourite aspect of job "Building up a rapport with customers," says Graham

Least favourite aspect of job "When people don't put their mugs in the dishwasher"

Strange but true "We play music in the showroom and one particular CD has chanting in the background. It creates a different kind of energy. Believe it or not, when it's on, the number of people that come into the showroom is higher"

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