

## TERRITORY 1

# KITCHEN

Cooking up a storm may not be your nightly ritual, but there's no doubt more and more men are brandishing knives in the kitchen. A 2008 study by researchers at Oxford University found that men now spend almost twice as much time in the kitchen as they did in 1961.

"Whether you consider yourself a master chef or a king of takeaway, the kitchen is the most frequented room of the house," says interior designer Penny del Castillo, director of InDesign International ([indesigninternational.com.au](http://indesigninternational.com.au)). "It's also the most functional, so it's worth paying close attention to detail."

Tackle the challenges below and you'll be well on your way to culinary perfection . . . and maybe even to winning her heart.



**PROBLEM:** you've invited her over for a gourmet feast and she's in the kitchen watching you cook. Now's not the time to stumble around like a blind man in a stranger's home.

**SOLUTION:** you'll want everything within arm's reach. "Utilise the area between the stove top and the cabinets," says IKEA kitchen expert Michael Baldivia. "Place a floating shelf there to hold the oils and spices you use most." Women want to see signs that you can cook, and this is a handy way to show that. To really show off, why not add utensil hooks and a magnetic knife rack while you're at it?

**MARK YOUR TERRITORY:** multi-tasking not your strong point? Consider the kitchen work triangle. "This is where the fridge, stove top and sink are positioned within 3-4 metres of each other to form an invisible triangle," says kitchen colour consultant Lorraine Brigdale, of The Laminex Group ([thelaminexgroup.com.au](http://thelaminexgroup.com.au)). It improves workflow, allowing you to concentrate on more important things . . . like not chopping your thumb off.



**PROBLEM:** she's plonked herself on your bench top, taking up valuable work space.

**SOLUTION:** create more bench area by getting a chopping board to fit over your sink. "You can also get colanders that fit [the sink] and sink lids to hide your dirty dishes should you have an unexpected visitor or are simply too busy to deal with them," suggests Baldivia.

**MARK YOUR TERRITORY:** "Place lights under your cabinet so you have enough light to use that bench top for prep if you need it," suggests del Castillo. Check out Hettich's Magic Lighting System of clip-and-snap-on LED lighting ([hettich.com.au](http://hettich.com.au)).



From top: Sunbeam Foodsaver; Ikea Rationell corner base; Eco Bokashi compost bucket; Coco Republic Remington adjustable stool.

**PROBLEM:** you've spent so much time slicing and dicing, you feel like your cleaver is wedged between your shoulderblades.

**SOLUTION:** rethink your bench height. The industry standard is 900 millimetres,

"but for tall people, it's a crippling height", says physiotherapist Sarah Key, the author of *The Back Sufferers' Pocket Guide* ([sarahkey.com](http://sarahkey.com)). "A shallow bend up to about 15° makes it difficult to switch on your stomach and pelvic-floor muscles in order to support your spine," she explains.

**MARK YOUR TERRITORY:** buy a thick chopping block, or get a custom-made one that suits your height at [buywoodfurniture.com.au](http://buywoodfurniture.com.au).

**MASTER OF YOUR DOMAIN:** go for wood; it won't blunt your blades as fast



Display your fruit in a distinctive bowl – it'll remind you to have your five a day. Make it shallow or clear, so you can see if the fruit at the bottom is turning into sludge.

"Enhance visibility and keep all your fingers by hanging pendant lights over the work bench," says Brigdale.

Bar stools that can be lowered and used as extra seating at the dining table are a smart choice.

as the other alternatives and, in a study by microbiologist Dr Dean Cliver at the University of California, it was found to be superior to marble, granite and plastic when it comes to antibacterial properties.

**PROBLEM: you need champagne, wine, martini, beer and spirit glasses, but where to house them?**

**SOLUTION:** smart storage. According to chef Justin North, owner of the two-hatted Becassé restaurant in Sydney, "lots of innovative storage space for ease of access is essential for a functional kitchen". Place extra shelves or hanging baskets in your existing cupboards and you can

double your storage space. "Adding shelves specific to the height of your wine glasses, for example, maximises the use of available space," adds del Castillo.

**MARK YOUR TERRITORY:** install shelves in your corner cupboards that rotate out, like Ikea's Rationell corner base fittings ([ikea.com.au](http://ikea.com.au)).

**MASTER OF YOUR DOMAIN:** riotously boozy dinner party left you minus three glasses – again? Cue Luigi Bormioli glassware. These Italian-made glasses use a technology known as SON.Hyx that makes them more durable and resistant to breakage. Pick some up at [everten.com.au](http://everten.com.au).



Porters Bay lamp, from Coco Republic.

**PROBLEM: you're paying your cleaner too much.**

**SOLUTION:** when it comes to updating your kitchen, remember that smooth lines are effective here, too. "Minimalist finishes, like having no handles on your cupboards or having a sink that's sunk into the bench, mean less dust-catching nooks and grooves," says Brigdale, "resulting in a kitchen that's much easier to clean."

**MARK YOUR TERRITORY:** upgrade to a Pyrolytic self-cleaning oven. "They heat up to 500°C to reduce oils and food residue to ash," says Ricel Bernardo, assistant category manager (cooking and cleaning) of LG Electronics Australia. Old white goods are a drain on your energy use and the environment anyway, so it's time to update any dinosaurs with appliances with a high-star energy rating.

**MASTER OF YOUR DOMAIN:** put bins away in a cupboard. Hideaway Bins ([hideawaybins.com.au](http://hideawaybins.com.au)) come in all shapes and sizes and are mounted on rails so they hang in your cupboard, popping out when you open the door.

**PROBLEM: your kitchen looks like it belongs to your visually impaired gran.**

**SOLUTION:** a DIY facelift. "Sheets of stainless steel can be placed straight over outdated tiles, and complementary handles and light fittings can be added, for an easy and modern industrial-inspired makeover," says del Castillo.

**MARK YOUR TERRITORY:** to incorporate texture and inject personality, apply blackboard paint to a section of your kitchen. You can write grocery lists and reminders there. When adding some colour "don't be safe", says Baldivia, who recommends you use Ferrari colours – silver, black and red – to finish off a bold, masculine kitchen.

**PROBLEM: your eyes are too big for your belly and you guiltily read somewhere that Aussie households throw away more than \$5 billion worth of food each year\*.**

**SOLUTION:** "A food saver that uses vacuum sealing to store left-over food, keep ingredients fresh and for freezing batches of food is a good investment," says North. The Sunbeam FoodSaver (\$299; available at Harvey Norman) claims to keep food fresh for five times longer than conventional methods.

**MARK YOUR TERRITORY:** if you have a garden, buy a compost bin, so you can put leftovers to good use. Check out the Eco Bokashi bucket from eco-organics ([eco-organics.com.au](http://eco-organics.com.au)).

\* SOURCE: analysis of household expenditure on food, conducted by the Australia Institute in November 2009.



Use an iPad to watch movies as you cook, or to follow online instruction recipes. Some apps will devise a shopping list for the recipe you want to make and others will provide recipes based on what you already have in your fridge.

Don't waste water waiting for the tap to run hot. Install a water-recirculating pump (try [carhil.com.au](http://carhil.com.au)), which recirculates cooled water to provide instant piping-hot H<sub>2</sub>O. For as little as \$500, you could save up to 16,000 litres of water a year.

Ensure your plug fits the sink securely – to stop precious water leaking away.



# LIVING ROOM

Twenty-first-century living is done at warp speed, and you need to take time to relax, sit down and put your feet up. According to the 2006 "How Australians Use Their Time" survey by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, you spend an average of 16 hours and 20 minutes a week watching TV and DVDs or listening to music. If you're going to spend this much time chilling, it pays to create a relaxing downtime zone that's a showroom for your tastes and personality. We show you how.

**PROBLEM: your lounge room resembles an electronic jungle and you think it's growing.**

**SOLUTION:** you're not alone. The average household has 12 electronic gadgets, according to a recent survey by Connection Research. Get an entertainment unit that'll house everything. "The options for getting them all out of your face are endless," says IKEA living rooms expert Neta Mumford.

**MARK YOUR TERRITORY:** look for one that completely shuts your TV away (or distracts from it), so that 42-inch flatscreen doesn't dominate your living space.



**PROBLEM: your girl is complaining that your once-cream couch now looks like it's wearing camouflage.**

**SOLUTION:** a dark-coloured leather couch. "It's the most durable fabric you can get and it just gets better – and more comfy – with age," says Mumford.

**MARK YOUR TERRITORY:** "A separate armchair as another seating option will create balance," says Sydney architect William Smart, of Smart Design Studio ([smartdesignstudio.com](http://smartdesignstudio.com)). Get two of them – for you and your mate to enjoy epic *BioShock* battles.

**MASTER OF YOUR DOMAIN:** save your spine while you're glued to the box by investing in a firm, supportive couch. "If your couch is too soft, your spine collapses in a completely recumbent C-bend. Your back needs support while you relax," says Key, who's treated members of the Royal family. If your couch is too soft or deep, Key suggests adding lots of pillows that can be shoved into the small of your back for added support.

**PROBLEM: it's so cold you can no longer feel your toes.**

**SOLUTION:** under-floor heating. "It's efficient, doesn't dry out the air and it's silent," says Smart, who recently won a Royal Australian Institute of Architects award for Adaptive Re-use (adapting old structures to new uses). It can be laid under tiles, floating or fixed



From top: Blu Box fireplace; Furniture King L-shaped couch; Coco Republic Air Command lamp and Criss Cross coffee table.

timber floors and carpet, and can be set up on a room-by-room basis. Check out the options at [comfortheat.com.au](http://comfortheat.com.au).

**MARK YOUR TERRITORY:** for an environmentally friendly option, green designer Darryn Parkinson, of Your Abode ([yourabode.com.au](http://yourabode.com.au)), recommends hydronic heating systems (check out [hydrospec.com.au](http://hydrospec.com.au)), which pumps hot water through pipes to heat the room from the floor up.

**PROBLEM: you lack the man skills to build a fire and the burning-log DVD just won't cut it.**

**SOLUTION:** a flame in a box, or more specifically, an eco-friendly fireplace that's fuelled by denatured ethanol (also known as methylated spirits).

**MARK YOUR TERRITORY:** there's no smoke and no chimney, meaning they can go anywhere. "Build them into the wall unit or have it freestanding in your living space," says Stephane Thomas, of The Fire Company, which created Blu Box Fireplaces ([bluboxfireplaces.com.au](http://bluboxfireplaces.com.au)). But don't expect it to warm the entire house. "They're 60 per cent visual and 40 per cent functional – more about the wow factor and ambience," says del Castillo.

**MASTER OF YOUR DOMAIN:** it's a sure-fire way to get her to snuggle up to you, and the female body is a very effective heat source.

**PROBLEM: the terrifying thought of dust mites feeding on your dead skin cells made you spill your red wine on the carpet.**

**SOLUTION:** rip up the shagpile. According to a report by the University of Southampton in the UK, a square metre of carpet can harbour 100,000 dust mites capable of triggering asthma and other allergic responses.

"Hard floors are practical: spills can be wiped away and they don't suffer from wear and tear as much as carpets do," says Mumford.

**MARK YOUR TERRITORY:** rug up. "Hard floors call for rugs and they're a



To stretch your spine, take a 5cm stack of books and place them under the lower back while lying on the floor, suggests Key, whose BackBlock serves the same purpose.

great way of creating visual barriers in a room," says Smart. "Placing one under the lounge area and another one under the dining table, for example, will help to separate the areas."

**PROBLEM: reading in low-level light is a shortcut to putting your eyes behind glass.**

**SOLUTION:** far from being an old wives' tale, US researchers at Vanderbilt University report that the pupil is forced to grow larger to compensate for the darkness, then struggles to direct the light onto the correct part of the retina, causing blurring and ultimately near-sightedness. **MARK YOUR TERRITORY:** add an adjustable lamp over the couch.

**PROBLEM: your pad is more Batman's cave than Bruce Wayne's mansion.**

**SOLUTION:** clever lighting can create a sense of more space. "If you have a low ceiling then avoid overhead lighting," says del Castillo. "It can make the space feel



Ensuring that your home is properly insulated can reduce your heating and cooling costs by up to 50 per cent.

Place an adjustable lamp next to the couch and reading will be far less eye-damaging.

Choose a couch that supports your spine while you kick back. For more support, add a few cushions or pillows that can be placed behind the small of your back.

The ideal distance between the couch and the TV should be around four times the height of the screen.

claustrophobic." If you have a dining area in this room, hang a pendant light above it to give sufficient light for eating your meal. **MARK YOUR TERRITORY:** forget dimmers, wall lamps, halogens and light boxes – is there really anything better than a classic, stylish corner lamp to give ambient light and exhibit your good taste? **MASTER OF YOUR DOMAIN:** open up a cluttered living space by looking for a coffee or dining table made from glass and "create a sense of more space by hanging a mirror to open up the room and reflect light or a view", says David Heimann, of contemporary Sydney design store Orson & Blake ([orsonandblake.com.au](http://orsonandblake.com.au)).

**PROBLEM: you're planning a Saw marathon, but it's one o'clock in the afternoon.**  
**SOLUTION:** transform your living room into a dark, dungeon-like, er, we mean cinema-like setting by installing double roller blinds (check out Luxaflex Flexi Glide Dual Roller Blinds at [luxaflex.com.au](http://luxaflex.com.au)).

"They feature two blinds mounted on the one set of brackets," explains Genevieve Marshall, marketing manager of Luxaflex Window Fashions. "One is translucent and the other is block-out, maximising both light control and privacy with one window covering." For true Hollywood style, go for the remote-controlled motorised variety. **MARK YOUR TERRITORY:** you can throw out your feather duster. "Roman or roller blinds have the added bonus of not gathering as much dust as many other styles," says Mumford.

**PROBLEM: your pad has as much personality as your dentist's waiting room.**  
**SOLUTION:** don't be afraid to put yourself on show. "I love bookshelves in homes," says Smart. "They are like a snapshot of who you are." Display your books, photos and knick-knacks you've picked up while travelling. Put the year-10 high-jump trophy in storage (or better still, the bin).

**MARK YOUR TERRITORY:** colour can be tricky. If you're not keen on using a colour consultant, Smart recommends that you go for neutral tones. Then add rugs and cushions that pick up on colours within your artwork, suggests del Castillo. (Turn to "The Art of Choosing Art", page 106, for advice on buying and hanging art.) **MASTER OF YOUR DOMAIN:** add a feature wall. "Go for a textured paint for a more masculine feel and it'll change the atmosphere of the room," says Lucena-Orr.

**PROBLEM: she's accused you of being irresponsible and uncaring.**  
**SOLUTION:** flex your green thumb. Plants will not only show her that you can care for something other than yourself, they're good for your health, too. Washington State University research shows that being in their presence stems stress. And according to Dr Bill Wolverton, the author of *Plants: Why You Can't Live Without Them*, they also improve indoor air quality by filtering pollutants.



➤➤ Get a plant to cut stress and enjoy cleaner air.

## TERRITORY 3

# BEDROOM

You spend one-third of your life in bed. Take our tips for putting together a restful man cave and you'll not only promote good health, you'll also create an inviting space that your girl will want to spend more "quality" time in.

**PROBLEM: your man smell is not overly intoxicating.**

**SOLUTION:** women have a far better sense of smell than men, according to the Fraunhofer Institute in Munich. So you want your bedroom to smell nice. Not like a Lynx factory, but not like dirty socks and beer, either. Scented candles work well and choosing the right whiff can tailor the mood.

**MARK YOUR TERRITORY:** For quality shut-eye, go for jasmine. Men who lit a jasmine-scented candle before bed fell asleep faster, tossed and turned less and felt more refreshed in the morning, report US researchers at Wheeling Jesuit University.

For relaxation (and reward), go for sandalwood. Researchers at the University of Warwick discovered that sandalwood is molecularly similar to a steroid found in human sweat that acts as a tranquilliser, and a Dutch study at the University of Groningen found that "deep relaxation and a lack of anxiety" were most important for women to experience pleasure.

To get her in the mood, go for vanilla. The Smell & Taste Treatment & Research Foundation in the US reports that vanilla increases alpha brainwaves that decrease inhibitions and lead to greater sexual desire.

To firm up, go for anise. Those clever boffins at The Smell & Taste Foundation also found that a whiff of liquorice increases blood flow to the penis, prolonging erection.

**MASTER OF YOUR DOMAIN:**

head to [bypurepleasure.com.au](http://bypurepleasure.com.au) for aromatherapy candles made from organic soy beans and 100 per cent essential oils. As the wax melts, it can be used as a warm massage oil, and a study at I-Shou University in Taiwan found that a soothing massage can cause her body to release the "trust hormone" oxytocin.

**PROBLEM: you wake up lethargic and stiff (and not in a good way).**

**SOLUTION:** a supportive inner spring or spring-coil mattress. You lose 20 per cent of the intradiscal fluid in your spine throughout the day, so you're about 2cm shorter by the end of the day. "This returns to your discs while you sleep," says Key, "and it's important that you're relaxed for this to happen." When



Spice up your life with a scented candle.

buying your mattress, Key recommends that you lie on all the beds you try for at least a minute. "It should feel like it's thrusting you up from below, like a million tiny springs, so that you're spring loaded as you roll over."

**MARK YOUR TERRITORY:** does your bed buddy like a different mattress firmness? "Everyone has different needs," says Keys, "and a dual-mattress system will stop you and your partner from rolling into the middle and getting stuck. You need free movement while you sleep." Check out the Sleep Number beds at Harvey Norman,

which can be adjusted for individual firmness and prevent roll-together ([harveynorman.com.au](http://harveynorman.com.au)).

**PROBLEM: your neck's kinkier than your sex life.**

**SOLUTION:** natural-fibre pillows. The best combo is feather and down, says Key. "Your pillow should nestle your head," she explains, "and, when you're lying on your side, it should fill out the space between the tip of your shoulder and the side of your neck."

**MARK YOUR TERRITORY:** Downia Soft Side Up pillows have a dual chamber



A feature wall of vertical stripes can make a low ceiling look higher.

A feature wall can also anchor the bed. A large artwork placed above the bed will have the same effect.

Store a gym under your bed. *MH* Muscle Guy Paul Haslam says all you need for a full-body workout is "one adjustable barbell, a pair of adjustable dumbbells, a door-jamb chin-up bar and an inflatable exercise ball".

Choose organic bedding to avoid sleeping in a toxic stew.

to provide both firm and soft support, dependent upon which side you place your head. Look for them at Domayne ([domayne.com.au](http://domayne.com.au)).

**MASTER OF YOUR DOMAIN:** you may believe throw pillows on beds are for girls, and you'd be right, just not in the sissy way you think. "Lots of pillows create a welcoming bed for her," says *MH* sex coach Jacqueline Hellyer. "But you can also use them to prop her up and support different sexual positions."

**PROBLEM: she's bashful with the lights on.**

**SOLUTION:** "Men, being visually driven during sex, want to see what's going on, but women are a lot more self-conscious about their bodies than men, so keep the lighting low," advises Hellyer.

**MARK YOUR TERRITORY:** shut off the bright overhead light. "It's the most

unflattering lighting for all people," says del Castillo. She suggests scattering many light sources around the bedroom to create soft lighting from all angles. "Candles are great; there's something about the flickering effect that women love," adds Hellyer.

**PROBLEM: you're ripping off each other's clothes . . . she trips over your runners and face-plants into your dirty gym shorts.**

**SOLUTION:** women are not fans of the floorrobe. "Make your room clean and tidy; this cannot be stressed enough," says Hellyer.

**MARK YOUR TERRITORY:** don't kick the clothes under your bed; lift the lid on one that has storage built into the base. You don't have to have Superman's strength to open it – a hydraulic lift raises the mattress to reveal storage. And according to



From top: Orson & Blake tan leather stool and table light; Fanuli shelving and Presidia lamp; Coco Republic Eaton chair.

Key, these beds also help to air your mattress. Check out the stylish selection at Fanuli Furniture ([fanuli.com.au](http://fanuli.com.au)).

**PROBLEM: your nightly bedroom tussle is not a fun one.**

**SOLUTION:** whether you buy into Feng Shui or not, its thoughts about bed position make sense. "When one side of the bed is up against a wall, this can have an impact on your relationship," says Feng Shui expert Ken Lauher ([kenlauher.com](http://kenlauher.com)). You may want her to crawl over you to get out of bed, but – believe us – it'll annoy her.

**MARK YOUR TERRITORY:** and position the flatscreen . . . are you kidding? Banish electronics. "Your bedroom's for sleep and sex, get rid of everything else. Phones, computers, TVs. Gone," says Hellyer. In a study by Italian sexologist Serenella Salomoni, couples with TV-free bedrooms had sex twice as often as those with a screen to stare at.

**PROBLEM: as well as the sun, the garbage man comes in at 5.30am.**

**SOLUTION:** he may not be in your room, but it sounds like he is. Shut out the garbo gossip with retrofit double-glazing for your windows. Magnetite ([magnetite.com.au](http://magnetite.com.au)) is an acrylic-glazing panel that is fitted to the interior of your existing windows using magnetic seals. Tests by the National Acoustic Laboratory found that installing the Magnetite system can reduce noise through an existing window by up to 70 per cent. They'll also increase the energy efficiency of your home and, in turn, the money efficiency of your bank account.

**MARK YOUR TERRITORY:** install double roller blinds here, too, and night can last all day.

**PROBLEM: you'd prefer not to wrap yourself in chemicals each night.**

**SOLUTION:** invest in natural fibres to dress your bed. "Most cotton materials are grown with enormous amounts of pesticides, and any bedding labelled 'wrinkle free' and as containing 'flame retardant' are high in chemical compounds and should be avoided," says Parkinson. He suggests certified-organic cotton bed sheets from [ecolinen.com](http://ecolinen.com).

**MARK YOUR TERRITORY:** if you'd prefer to have soft flooring in your bedroom, go for wool. Wool carpet got the thumbs up in a study by New Zealand-based AgResearch, which found that it neutralises indoor air contaminants formaldehyde and nitrogen dioxide. It's also naturally stain-resistant. The jury is still out on whether it protects against carpet burn.



Enjoy privacy and turn day into night with double roller blinds.

"Having a chair to throw your jacket and tie on at the end of the day, or to sit and read, is a nice touch for a bedroom," says Smart.

Hellyer says a chair can be used for more than just reading. Use your imagination and maybe go for one in an easy-clean material!