



# ‘We wanted a room that all the family could enjoy’

Catherine and Shane Sylvester extended their modern home to create a bright, sociable kitchen space that is ideal for cooking and relaxing in

WORDS NATALIE FLAUM PHOTOGRAPHS KEVIN MCFEELY



**DESIGN TIP**  
 Bringing sunlight into your home from different directions will add to the quality of space throughout the day. Clerestory windows achieve this with minimal solar gain compared to a glazed roof

**BEFORE**



**FACT FILE**

**THE OWNERS**

Catherine Sylvester (below right), who works in retail sales, and her husband, Shane, a builder and metal fabricator, live here with their children, Ellen, 12, John, nine and Lily, five

**THE PROPERTY**

A four-bedroom, semi-detached house built in 2000

**THE LOCATION**

Swords in Dublin, Ireland

**WHAT THEY SPENT**

The couple's kitchen and extension project cost around £65,000

**OLD KITCHEN**

Above When the family bought the house, the kitchen was dark and small. Catherine often felt isolated when she was cooking, so they decided to completely overhaul the space

**SPACIOUS DESIGN**

Left The open-plan kitchen and living area features ample space to cook and relax. Champagne-coloured high-gloss units from Kube

Kitchens reflect light around the room. The quartz worktops were supplied by Pennywell, which also built the bespoke island unit that houses the oven



**W**e lived with our previous long, narrow kitchen for 13 years,' recalls Catherine. 'I'm the youngest of three brothers and a sister, all with large families who often come over for dinner. Before, our space was limited, with no room to chat while I cooked. My husband Shane and I knew we wanted to extend the kitchen to give us more space, so the design grew from there.'

With the necessary planning permission granted, a 20-week build programme began in early 2012, helping to create an

extra 28 square metres of ground-floor living space. Plans involved opening up the ground floor and extending it, bringing it in line with the previous side extension, and also adding bi-fold doors that would link the kitchen to the garden.

'I wanted one large room that we could all enjoy and spend time in together, whether it be while cooking, relaxing on the sofa, or sitting at the island,' says Catherine. Assisted by architect Derek Trenaman, Shane, a builder by trade, took over project managing the build. 'With

Derek on board and a relative of mine acting as foreman, we hired recommended contractors to dig the foundations, as Derek and Shane built the timber frame structure and blockwork together.'

As the back of the house faces north and rarely catches the sun, Derek suggested east-west clerestory windows to maximise the light to the rear of the extension.

All internal works were carried out first, which included removing the dividing kitchen and dining room wall and moving the kitchen from the existing side extension ▶



#### SEAMLESS FLOW

**Above** The limestone floor tiles are in two different finishes: honed inside and hammered on the patio, joined over a level threshold so that when the Vindr Vs bi-fold doors are open, the area becomes one continuous space

#### SEATING AREA

**Left** Orange scatter cushions match the vibrant splashback, and an abstract painting by Dublin-based artist Jennifer Hart adds colour and pattern to the living room

directly across to the new space that used to be the dining room. The entire width of the property was extended and opened up at the rear, creating a bright new kitchen-diner, with expansive glass doors and clerestory windows that ensure the open-plan room is now flooded with light.

'While the building work was going on, we lived in the front room with a cooker, microwave, dining table and chairs – almost everything we needed was in that room!' Catherine laughs. 'We depended on family, friends and neighbours, who were brilliant and allowed me use their cookers.'

The couple's most difficult part of the project was supporting the back of the house as the new extension was being erected. 'We had to seek an engineer's advice on structural issues, as the side walls were constructed on the party wall line, which then changed the whole design

of the foundations,' says Shane. 'The complete back wall and side of the house had to be supported with metal needles to facilitate the fitting of hidden beams.'

'When the back wall of the house came out, there was just a sheet that was put over in the evening,' adds Catherine. 'My neighbours would often laugh at me as I washed my dishes outside in the open air! It was a nightmare. You think its going to be tough, but you never know just how tough it is until you're living through it.'

Catherine and Shane bought all their appliances directly from local outlets and

selected champagne-coloured gloss units from Dublin-based kitchen retailer Kube Kitchens. 'The colour of the units varies in different lights, from greens to greys,' says Catherine. Pennywell supplied the quartz worktops and designed the large, white island that houses the oven, microwave, a hot plate drawer and deep pan-storage drawers. 'I wanted a practical, sociable kitchen that isn't precious, and just does what it says on the tin.'

'Shane and I were browsing the internet when we noticed a girl wearing an orange dress and that was the inspiration for the coloured toughened glass splashback. When we first put it up people were surprised but, like everything, the colour has really grown on us.'

Shane and Catherine decided to restrict television to the living room elsewhere, so there is no TV in the open-plan living area. 'As soon as you put a TV in a room, the art of conversation is lost, so we decided to ban it from this room,' Catherine explains.

'After family meals, when the kitchen is closed, we all sit in the front room to watch TV.'

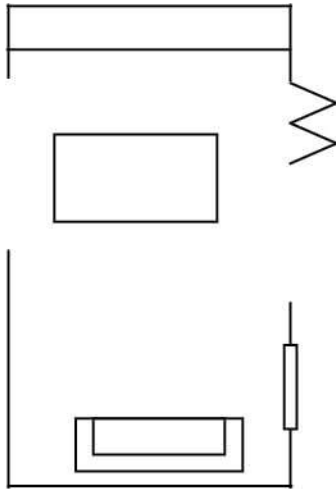
Delays due to bad weather hindered the schedule and labour costs doubled, increasing

the budget. 'As we went for such a high-end spec, we felt we had to select furniture to match the overall design, hence the reason our budget spiralled out of control and we ended up spending

**'I wanted a practical, sociable kitchen that isn't precious, and just does what it says on the tin'**

## THE PLANS

## AFTER



The kitchen has been extended across the rear of the house to create an open-plan space, with bi-fold doors leading out to the garden

## THE COSTS

Building work	£38,000
Limestone flooring and paving	£10,000
Kitchen units	£7,600
Bi-fold doors and windows	£3,800
Appliances	£3,000
Worktops	£2,300
Lighting	£550
Sink and tap	£400
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£65,650</b>

## THE CONTACTS

Architect Ceardean Architectural Design, 00353 876 436 645, ceardean.com  
 Structural engineer RA Duggan 00353 280 8834  
 Kitchen Kube Kitchens  
 Quartz worktop and island Pennywell  
 Flooring North Wicklow Marble & Granite  
 Rooflights, window and bi-fold doors Vindr Vs  
 Thermal skirting heat system Thermodul

double,' says Catherine. 'The build was supposed to be finished in far less time, and we had to take out loans and use savings to finance it, but it was worth it as the end result is fabulous. Whenever we have guests, they all congregate in the kitchen. We love entertaining now and have hosted lots of dinner parties.

'We can see the morning sun rise in the east and set in the west through the new skylight roof panels, so at all times the sun goes round the house. It's so lovely.' 🏠



## Project notes

Catherine Sylvester shares her tips for a successful extension

## What I've learnt

'The weather can have such an impact on a project. It rained almost continuously. We had builders turn up and leave as they couldn't work under such wet conditions.'

## My top tip

'Hiring a good architect is paramount - we'd have been lost without Derek. Shane had a full-time job as well as managing this project, which was hard to do, so depending on your budget I would consider hiring a project manager.'

## My favourite feature

'I love the limestone floor tiles, as they give us that streamlined look inside and out. They had to be shipped from Portugal but were worth the wait. Whatever time of year, they always look clean outside.'

## Clever idea

'Instead of having radiators, we opted for the Thermodul heat system, where all the heat comes from the skirting boards, leaving the walls free for furniture.'

## My best buy

'The Italian bar stools from Arena Kitchens are so comfortable and everybody loves them.'

## Planning the layout

'Derek worked closely with Shane on the overall design of the space. The bi-fold doors have made such a huge difference in terms of light, and the island creates the perfect sociable place to gather.'

## I couldn't live without...

'...my Miele fridge and freezer. Before, I had a combined fridge-freezer, but you can pack so much more into two separate appliances.'

## My favourite spot

'The island: I love it when people come to sit and chat with me over a glass of wine while I cook. I don't miss out on anything anymore.' 🏠



Above The integrated Miele fridge and freezer sit within the kitchen units

Right The Italian bar stools, from Arena Kitchens, are Catherine's best buy

Below The aluminium bi-fold doors and clerestory windows are from Vindr VS

