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MAGAZINE

DECEMBER 2021 £4.99





SEATING Ideal for parties, or forci



Ideal for parties, or for simply providing a bit more comfort at breakfast, family dinners or when working from home, banquettes are versatile and make the most of every inch of space – even awkward corners

Words: Georgina Townshend

hile it's undeniable that having a kitchen island has remained high on many a wishlist, the way they are being built is certainly changing. Over the past year, interest in banquette seating has been steadily rising, showing perhaps a deviation in the oh-so-popular barstool set-up. And yes, they look good – but are they practical?

Unlike barstools or dining chairs, banquettes are usually upholstered with high backs, providing not only the ultimate comfort for dinner parties, but an equally beautiful spot to spend a morning with a coffee and an issue of KBB.

Of course, it doesn't have to link to an island. This seating style can be a standalone feature in a bay window, adjoin a wall of cabinetry paired with a dining table, or provide an excellent solution for unusual niches. From large to small, L-shape to U-shape, upholstered or with scatter cushions, the possibilities are vast.

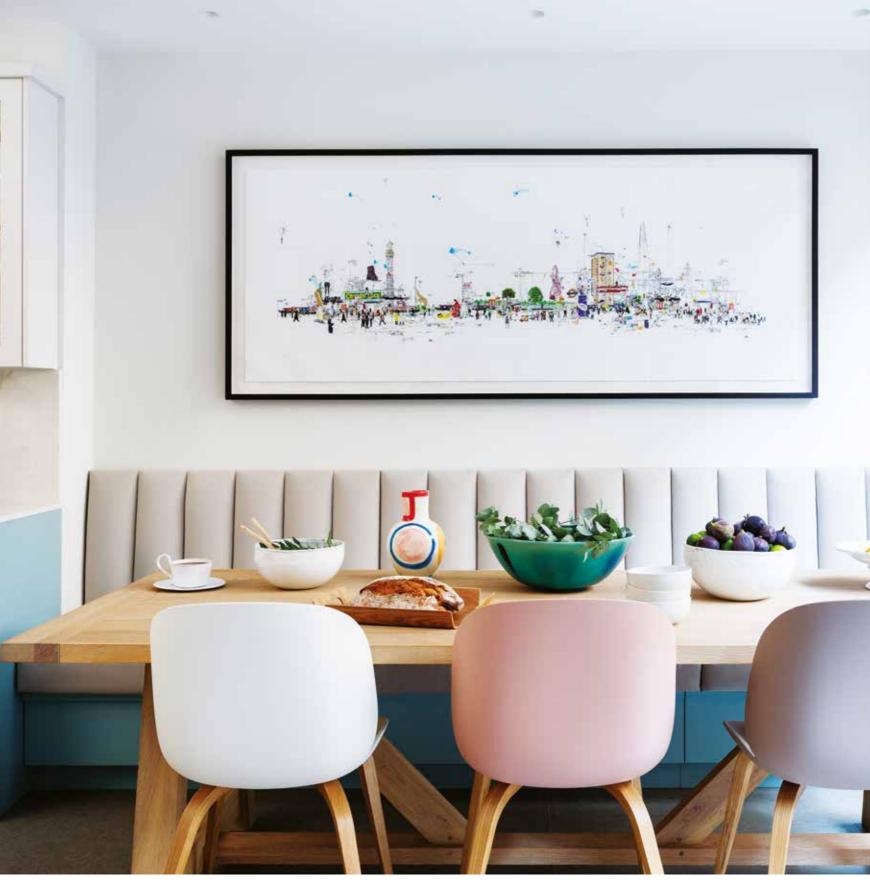
Rebecca Northmore, design manager at Hux London, says, "Banquettes can add character or quirkiness and can be more practical than chairs. They can also be used as a dividing feature for open-plan spaces." Cat Dal, at Cat Dal Interiors, also describes it as an excellent way to provide flexibility. "For example, if you suddenly have a larger group over, there's no scrambling for extra chairs as the bench can be seating for four to eight. Designs can also provide ample storage underneath which is always helpful," she explains.

If you're considering banquette seating, there are a few things to think about first. For instance, it is usually built to order by either a bespoke kitchen companies or a joiner, so while pretty much anything is possible, the made-to-measure nature could come with a higher price tag depending on your space. "In most circumstances, banquette seating needs a pre-installation survey and has to be fitted by a professional - invariably there are details like skirting boards or pipes that may require adjustments," says Rebecca.

Banquettes are usually upholstered, so think carefully about your material choice. You'll likely want something that can withstand a bit of wear and tear and is not vulnerable to food and drink spills. "With this in mind, many designers opt for upholstery which can be wiped clean or choose patterned designs with good stain-hiding properties," Rebecca suggests.

If you've decided on built-in seating but are unsure where to start, talk to your kitchen or interior designer about where one could be placed. We take a look at some options to give you inspiration for your very own design. >







EXPERT ADVICE

"Remember to assess your space, and talk to you designer about the size of your banquette. Too big and it will overcrowd the space – but opt for one that's too small and it could limit the amount of people you can invite for a dinner party." Georgina, features editor

above This kitchen design by Hux London features Aqua Blue and white cabinetry, complemented by ice cream shades in the dining area. Further storage is concealed beneath the upholstered banquette. Hux London kitchens start from £35,000.

right The homeowners' brief to Roselind Wilson Design was to create a large kitchen and dining area, but to ensure that it felt like a living space rather than simply a kitchen. Banquette seating was the natural choice for the large bay window, so when they were planning the layout, this became the starting point. Roselind Wilson Design kitchens start from £30,000.







