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Inside

TAYLISTmedia

S SEATING

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**

While 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. >

Interior designer Cat Dal offers various methods of upholstery on her banquette seating, from more structured, supported and opulent for a cocktail lounge, to informal, casual, comfortable yet durable for a family breakfast table, seen here. Cat Dal Interiors start from £20,000.



Photography: Rachael Smith



EXPERT ADVICE

“Remember to assess your space, and talk to your 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.

Working with Adam Fadle at Panoramic Properties, Arthouse Creative Interiors created a large open-plan space for family life and entertaining. They wanted to bring the day-to-day breakfast area into the heart of the kitchen, softening the transition with an integrated, curved banquette and table. Arthouse Creative Interiors kitchens start from £25,000. >

Photography: Claire Armitage



Photography: Richard Waite





Why not place banquette seating at the end of your cabinetry for a seamless look, like this design by Alistair Fleming Design? Kitchens start from £40,000.



Banquette seating works for those of us who love cooking and entertaining equally – just like this homeowner, who wanted a feeling of openness with added interest. Jones Britain's bespoke range of kitchens start from £40,000.

Photography: Ryan Wicks



This island features a contoured banquette, finished in upholstery from Newcastle Kitchen & Bedroom Co's partner Fleur Interior Design and custom table to help create a sociable environment. Newcastle Kitchen & Bedroom Co designs start from £25,000.



Not all banquette seating has to be upholstered, as this L-shape design by Masterclass Kitchens, seen in Hardwick Vintage Rose with Shelford Farrington Grey, proves. Designed and installed by Et Lorem, prices for Masterclass Kitchens start from £12,000.