

Judith Zerdin visits a kitchen where conversation and companionship are high on the menu

Feeding an appetite for good company

The kitchen is the heart of a Jewish home — not only for the cooking and eating of chicken soup. It's a place where people naturally congregate, to chat and generally relax, so it's important to have a cosy, yet user-friendly feel to the room.

Among the main kitchen gripes are insufficient worksurfaces, lack of cupboards and shortage of room to move around, so using space to its best advantage is a vital consideration for anyone planning a kitchen.

When Sue and Elliot Rosenberg had a new kitchen fitted in their home in Northwood, they took this into account.

The former owners had two smallish rooms where the present kitchen is now, so the first thing the couple did was to knock down the walls and create a large, single room, with the kitchen at one end and a dining area at the other.

The Rosenbergs, who have two teenage daughters, chose central London designer Neil Lerner to devise and install their kitchen.

They benefited from Neil Lerner's computer-aided design process, which shows clients their prospective kitchen in 3D, so that changes can be made along the way.

The couple decided, in consultation with Neil, to make optimum use of space by having a glass breakfast bar coming out of a central island, and much of the kitchen activity revolves around that.

"I wanted the breakfast bar because, while I'm preparing food, if someone's here they can sit and chat to me," Sue explains.

The central island has opaque glass



Designed with storage, spaciousness and socialising in mind, Neil Lerner's kitchen for the Rosenbergs

cupboards underneath it, which can be illuminated.

A cupboard closed off with a push-up roller shutter, rather than a conventional door, sits on top of the island, reaching to the ceiling. Sue keeps her kitchen appliances and mixers in here.

Also under the island is a microwave with combination oven and a grill, which is very useful for cooking small amounts of food without

having to use the big range — particularly as the fan oven is very fast.

As well as the glass cupboards in the central island, there is a corner cupboard that pulls out, where Sue keeps vegetables that don't need refrigerating, as well as dry foods such as crisps.

Another major component is the Amara stainless steel fridge/freezer. "It's lovely and deep, and has a huge shelf on the back of the door where I

keep bottles and drinks," she explains.

Next to the fridge is a full-height pull-out larder.

"I keep all my herbs, pasta, rice, tea bags and things like that there," Sue says. "Having the big fridge and then the larder right next to it makes putting the shopping away so easy."

As for the surfaces, the worktops, including the central island, are all made from thick, red wood, which

Sue finds very practical, despite its rather awe-inspiring magnificence.

"People ask me whether I worry about putting things down on it, but I'd never put anything hot on granite or Formica," she says. "And if I do chip it or anything, I've got some sanding-down blocks and some vegetable oil that came with it, so I just sand it and oil it over, and it becomes even redder and warmer."

The draining board is made from the same wood, but with grooves, so it's very useful for chopping vegetables, especially as the half-sink has a waste-disposal in it for discarded bits of veggie.

The cooker is a Britannia stainless-steel range cooker and can be used as a fan, grill or conventional oven, with another oven that's just conventional and grill. So together with the microwave, there's a lot of cooking space.

"I knew I wanted one of those big ranges, as I'd seen them in other people's houses. I do a lot of cooking and I like the look of them," Sue recalls. "Sometimes, if I'm cooking for lots of people, for example at Rosh Hashanah, I'll have all three ovens going at the same time."

The kitchen's colour scheme is blue, with aqua-coloured glass covering the walls above the wooden surfaces, while the cupboards, larder and dishwasher are all a very pale blue.

"It's very functional and user-friendly, especially with the breakfast bar, and there's always plenty of space," Sue remarks. "I spend most of my time here and am very happy with it."