

How to create the perfect breakfast nook

It's the modern must-have for a sociable kitchen, but what are the design rules?

Here, leading interior designers share successful projects and reveal their top tips **WORDS** CLAUDIA BAILLIE

Leah Ring, Another Human

'Comfort and durability were key for this nook, which was designed for a young family with dogs. This alcove already existed, but we installed new windows and raised the sill to accommodate the banquette. The profile of the seating is curvy, so it speaks to the floor tiles. We did some upholstery mock-ups to test cushion firmness and thickness to ensure that they would be comfortable and hold their shape, and the seats are upholstered in a Kelly Wearstler performance fabric. The café curtains can be opened if the parents want to keep an eye on the garden.' anotherhuman.la

Note When designing for families with pets and kids, material selections need to withstand wear and tear and still look good for years to come



▼ Jay Billiet, Jay J Billiet Interiors

'This nook was designed for the founder of a highly regarded residential-construction firm in New York City. The kitchen is quite small, but we wanted to create an area for coffee and snacking. A bespoke curved banquette – upholstered in a Sunbrella performance fabric suitable for an eating area – was inspired by the client's love of mid-century design, and the custom swing-arm table is a unique solution that allows for easy manoeuvring and maximises leg room in what could have been an awkward corner. The motif on the hand-painted abstract wallcovering by Porter Teleo was scaled to fit the niche.' jaybilliet.com

Note Function always comes first, but the key is to be creative with design solutions and finishes. A breakfast niche isn't a new concept, but that doesn't mean it can't look innovative and unique



PICTURE: ADRIANGAUT



Note It may sound obvious, but there's nothing less comfortable than a table that's too high or low. It needs to be somewhere you can sit for a quick cup of tea or for hours with a glass of wine

▲ Susie Atkinson, Studio Atkinson

'This nook is in an old, terraced cottage in Lymington. Sadly, the original architecture had been removed years ago, so we were asked to bring character back and create an informal, cosy area for entertaining. We designed the fully upholstered seat to wrap around the wall – none of them run straight, so templating was essential before the structure was made. Panelling helps add interest to the space. The table is newly made but antiqued, and we've paired it with our own "Craftmaker's" chairs, which adds texture. A mid-century pendant casts light downwards, giving a nice glow to the table at night-time.' studio-atkinson.com ►

▼ **Yasmine Ghoniem, YSG Studio**

'This curved nook sits within an extension and was designed to gather a family for casual meals, and to provide a perfect perch to work from home as it overlooks the garden. The seat is upholstered in a soft wool, alpaca and mohair fabric from Pierre Frey. Our Egyptian-Australian client longed for the colours of Egypt, so we used blue, gold and red floor tiles like a patterned rug, while stained glass brings in shades of turmeric and saffron. We suspended a Louis Poulson "PH5" pendant directly above the middle of the table.' [ysg.studio](#)



Note Choose a skin-friendly fabric that will feel soft on bare legs, particularly if children are going to be sat at the table



Note Enveloping colours, textures and patterns will create a place where you really want to be, rather than somewhere you simply pass through

▲ **Sophie Ashby, Studio Ashby**

'The brief for this jewel-box apartment centred around creating a vibrant, whimsical space that exudes personality. We treated the walls as works of art in their own right, and the nook is one of the most special moments. The Balineum tiles feature a mural by Anna Glover, which evokes the feeling of an English wildflower garden through the lens of historic Japanese illustration. The velvet banquette brings a note of softness that invites you to spend time in the space.' [studioashby.com](#)



Note Make sure that your banquette seating's cushions are the same height as the chairs – you don't want people to be sitting at different heights

► **Sarah Peake, Studio Peake**

'We wanted to make this nook colourful and fun – a backdrop to vibrant family life. The children were primary-school age, so the table needed to be used for family meals, homework, and arts and crafts. Connection to the garden was key – the window was a new addition to work with the height of the banquette. There are drawers under the seat, and the sloped back makes it comfortable, so you're not sitting against a cold wall. The colourful cushions create impact. A kitchen can be a space where you can't use a lot of fabric, but I try to squeeze in as much as possible.' [studiopeake.com](#)



PICTURES: INSONSMART, KENSINGTONLIEVERNE, LUCAS MADANI

Samantha Hauvette and Lucas Madani, Hauvette & Madani

'This project is in an apartment near Paris, where a friend lives with her children. The kitchen corridor naturally lent itself to a booth-like dining corner, so we seized the opportunity to create a dedicated eating zone. The challenge was sourcing a table for the space; we couldn't find a piece the owners loved, so this one is our custom-made "Jack" table. The warm, stained oak runs throughout the home, from door frames and headboards to library walls. In the kitchen, it creates a cohesive flow and tempers the apartment's otherwise stark shell.' [hauvette-madani.com](#)



Note Prioritise materials that age beautifully, and think of the nook as a 'destination', not an afterthought. Custom pieces often make all the difference

5 things to know before you go bespoke

Felix Milns, founder of bespoke-joinery specialist Hux London, knows that the secret to a successful nook is customisation and good preparation

- 1 Begin by defining the purpose. Think about how any bespoke seating or tables will be used: a quick espresso stop, a leisurely brunch spot with the weekend papers or a practical homework station for children? Each scenario provides an introduction to what type of seating, lighting and power outlets will be needed. A nook designed around the way you live will be more successful than an area based purely on aesthetics.
- 2 Measure the space carefully. A professional joiner will take exact dimensions, but a rule of thumb is to allow 90cm of table width and 60cm of depth per person. Being generous helps create a relaxed, comfortable atmosphere; if the space feels tight or awkward, it's likely to become a place people will avoid rather than enjoy.
- 3 Be sure to optimise functionality. Built-in benches can be designed to include lift-up seats with storage underneath that can help organise daily clutter, such as shoes, toys or sports gear.
- 4 Establish a budget from the outset. This enables clear decision-making and more productive conversations with a joiner or designer. Rather than viewing cost as a limitation, think of it as a framework for prioritisation – for instance, investing in high-quality upholstery or a durable tabletop can elevate the design, while wood veneer instead of solid timber on less-visible elements can help manage costs without compromising style.
- 5 Consider lighting from the beginning. Look out for adjustable pendants that can be raised and lowered to create atmosphere in the evening. Recessed LEDs add an extra layer of light and can be built into joinery. The focus is on creating an inviting pocket and a space that people will naturally be drawn to.

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