



*I love that we can all be in
here doing different things but
we can still be together*

GO WITH THE FLOW

A simple side extension helped Clapham resident Charlotte Fleetwood create the family home of her dreams

Words KAT HOPPS

Many of the best ideas are unplanned. They may come about as the result of compromise, debate or a crucial lightbulb moment but the end result is what matters. Charlotte Fleetwood's side extension in her Victorian house on Klea Avenue, Clapham, is a shining example. Charlotte, who lives here with husband and children Freddie, aged seven, and Arabella, aged five, explains just how much of the layout changed after the initial planning stages for the ten-month build in 2013 were agreed.

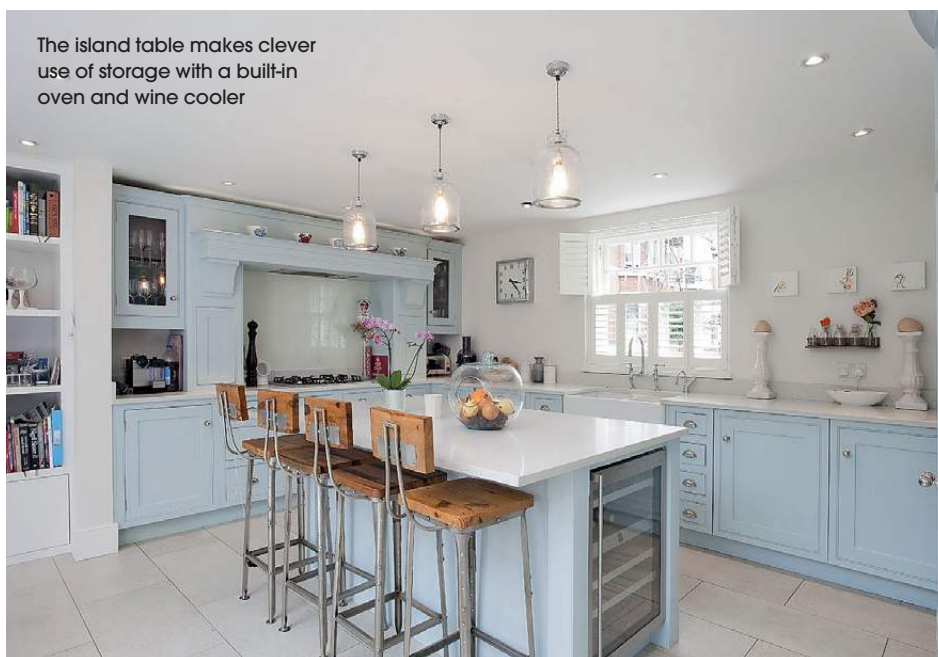
'At the beginning we were going to have a fireplace there,' she says, pointing to the television and bespoke timbre unit, 'but it seemed a bit oldey so we suddenly stripped back all the ideas and created space rather than clutter.'

And this was not the only adjustment. 'Originally I thought of the dining area as being where the lounge now is but it just works better for entertaining how it is,' Charlotte says. 'I didn't want people constantly being distracted by the door opening and closing.' The decision feels right; the table complements the long rectangular shape. 'For our first Christmas we had 35 people around it,' she adds.

The extension is exceedingly bright. It's elegant yet also a relaxed family living space with a wonderful flow. The L-shaped room combines a kitchen at the top, lounge area at the rear, which backs onto the garden through bi-folding doors and the dining table to the side. The three areas are distinct but they seamlessly blend as one. 'I love that we can all be in here doing different things' >



The garage and garden area was excavated to allow space for the side extension, now a hub for the family



The island table makes clever use of storage with a built-in oven and wine cooler

An impressive spiral staircase leads to a secret wine cellar



Build Team designed the patio area and used uplights to provide power to the garden

but we can still be together. For example, while I'm cooking, the children can be doing their homework and I can help them,' Charlotte explains. The aim of providing a unilateral family space originated from her frustration with the family's previous Brixton home where 'the table was in the kitchen and we'd all be in separate rooms.'

Light cascades through every corner of the 50 sqm space thanks to the exterior's bi-folding doors and a skylight roof — both made from powder-coated aluminium — another addition, in this case suggested by Build Team, the company which undertook the work.

'I always wanted my pale blue kitchen with grey worktops,' says Charlotte, guiding me around the kitchen, inspired by a Tom Howley version that she spotted in a magazine. It could come off as twee, however it's anything but because of the quirky finishes from the Antique by Design lights to the silver oval cup cupboard handles. 'I didn't want anything too industrial,' she says as I swoon over the lights. 'I felt they were a real statement, one that could either make the kitchen go country or modern.'

A quick rolling up of the rug reveals two hidden doors, which lead to a secret wine cellar

Although there is a larder and boiling tap, the kitchen remains largely gadget-free so that it remains a welcoming area, — perhaps even a little too welcoming I learn... 'I always thought we would be sitting in the lounge to have a drink but guests just crowd around the island,' Charlotte admits. 'We have a nice sitting room next door, which again I thought people would sit in but it's never used, apart for guitar practice!'

Best of that, there's an extra room that no game of eye spy could ever reveal. A quick rolling up of the rug next to the TV reveals two hidden doors, which when opened up, present a spiral staircase down into a wine cellar measuring 4m x 2m. What a bonus!

Apparently husband Tim is a big wine buff. 'I was allowed the kitchen and he was allowed the cellar,' Charlotte jokes but she is obviously pleased with the result. The tight space means no underpinning was required but the fitted drawers enable the couple to store bottles at air-conditioned temperatures, which comes in handy for entertaining.

Right now, Charlotte says the extension is a 'sanctuary' as the home undergoes further renovations including a roof extension and redesign of key rooms. As we speak, the dining tables is buried beneath piles of material samples, while the thuds of builders can be clearly heard upstairs. Thankfully it's summer time, so the family need only open the seven-metre bi-folding doors to make the room feel even larger and one continuous space into the garden.

Charlotte says she's happy with the result. 'I love the soft colours, the space and light. I don't take it for granted.'

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