

Media Outlet: Beautiful Kitchens

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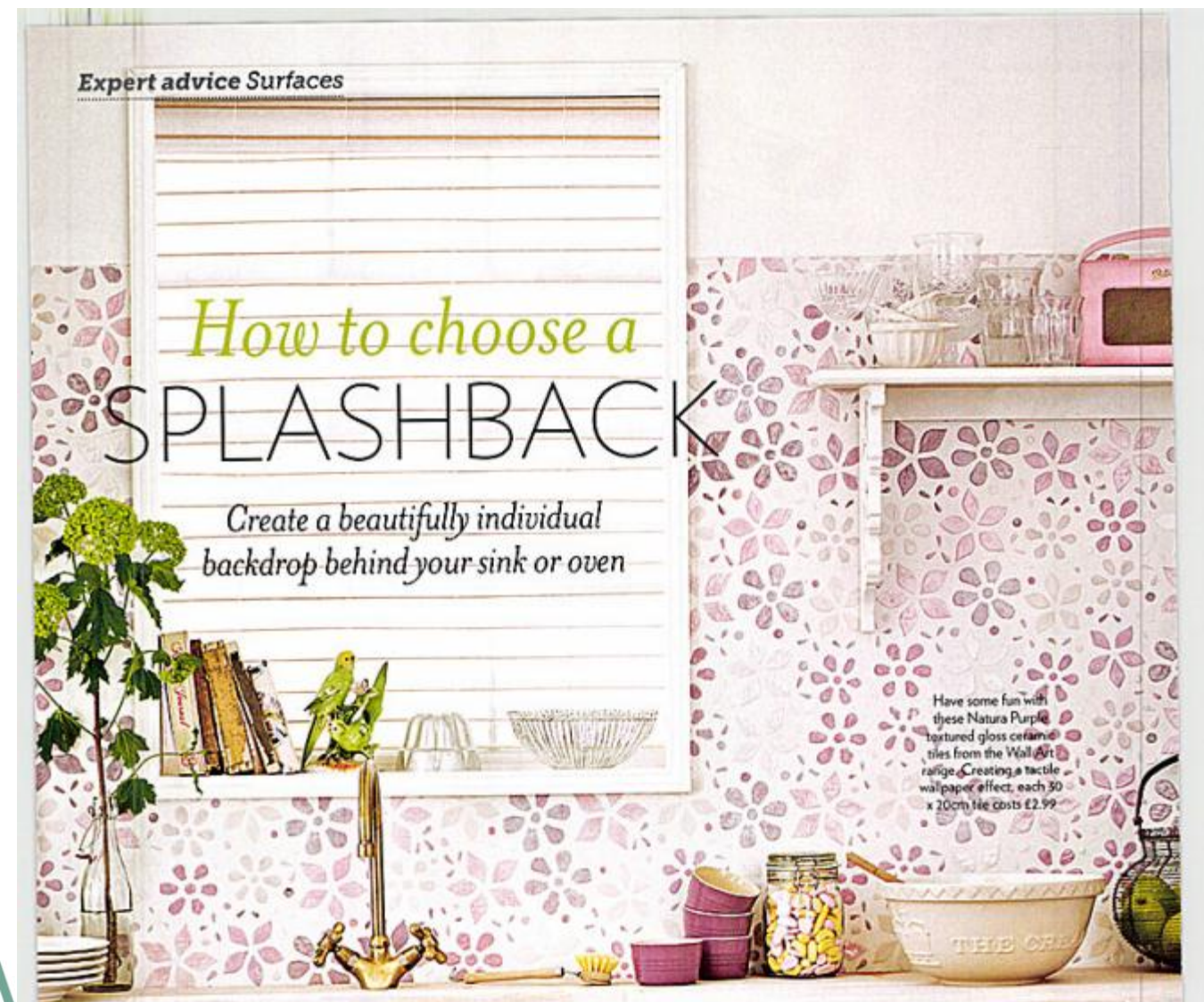
Beautiful KITCHENS

Expert advice Surfaces

How to choose a SPLASHBACK

*Create a beautifully individual
backdrop behind your sink or oven*

Have some fun with these Natura Purple textured gloss ceramic tiles from the Wall Art range. Creating a tactile wallpaper effect, each 30 x 20cm tile costs £2.99



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There's no rule to say that practical can't also be gorgeous and one of the best ways to add impact to your kitchen is to include a beautiful splashback. As long as the material you select is wipe-clean and protects your walls from water behind the sink and cooking splatter at the back of the hob, then there's no reason not to select something that creates a focal point. There are so many materials to choose from now, including practical stainless-steel, gorgeous glass and traditional tiles.

'When you walk into a kitchen, often the extractor hood and splashback are among the very first things you see,' says Robert Burnett, head of design at Holloways of Ludlow. 'The splashback is at eye level and can be quite a large item, so you can use it to make a design statement, whether you choose a nice piece of stone, glass in a bold colour or some striking tiles.' It pays to put a bit of thought into selecting this kitchen essential – read on for our expert advice on which type of material and look will suit your scheme.

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Where to begin

Start by thinking of the area to be covered: do you want a simple panel on the wall behind the hob or an entire run along an expanse? 'Generally, I think a splashback looks best if it runs across the whole width of wall, perhaps between tall cabinets at either end,' says Robert Burnett. 'This creates maximum impact and allows for the neatest finish.'

When it comes to height, most behind-the-hob splashbacks will run up to the extractor hood, or in a sink area, from the worktop to below the wall cabinets. However, it's really up to you: as long as there's enough height to catch the splashes, you can keep it as short or tall as you wish, and even vary heights or add curves for interest.

Ideally, there will be minimal joins, as one continuous smooth surface is easier to keep clean. You also may want to use the same material on the worktop as the wall for a seamless look, or go for contrast with different colours and finishes, especially glossy ones. 'Light-reflecting materials make a good choice for splashbacks, for both aesthetic

and practical reasons,' says Jane Stewart, design director of Mowlem & Co.

CHOOSING THE MATERIAL

Once upon a time, it was really all about tiles, but now there's a huge variety of tempting materials to choose from. Sleek back-painted glass splashbacks in an endless variety of colours are probably the most popular choice at the moment, thanks to their seamless modern finish and easy-to-clean, practical qualities. Nevertheless classic tiles, particularly metro brick-style shapes are still popular for schemes with a country-feel, while stone and steel are also perennial favourites. Look out, too, for the newer materials available such as composites to match your worktops, glamorous mirrors and even enamels. Remember, glass, stone or a composite will need to be templated and cut if there are plugs on the wall, just like worksurfaces in these materials. Each cut will add to the cost of the finished splashback, as will any finishing, honing or polishing.

BUYER'S CHECKLIST

Great for a quick fix or a cheaper option, many companies now offer 'off the peg' splashbacks (usually from 60cm wide) with holes pre-drilled or that have a strong adhesive backing, meaning they can be fitted by a competent DIYer.

If you are retro-fitting a splashback, always check the height between the wall cupboards and the worksurface to ensure the surface you choose will sit snugly in the space with no gaps.

Consider the details carefully before you buy: do you want power points cut out of your splashback material? Will you want to hang shelves on the surface? What about lighting?

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A splashback the same width as the range cooker creates a neat look. Available in 110, 100 and 90cm sizes. Elite is shown here in Black Glass and costs from around £110. Rangemaster



Framed by an overmantel, this backlit splashback is made from glass bottles and comes in a variety of hues. With a maximum size of 110 x 75cm, it costs £325. Bottle Alley Glass

Glass

Toughened and made to have a heat resistance of up to about 400°C for safety, a glass splashback is easy to clean and non-porous, making it ideal for use behind sinks as well as hobs. Most examples are 6mm thick and can be back-painted in just about any colour you want, which is great if you have a particular shade in mind to match your cabinetry or walls. You can

also buy glass splashbacks with motifs, pictures and even have a design made using images from your own family photos. Being highly reflective, glass will bounce light around the room, enhancing the sense of space and it can be as low key or as striking as you like. Expect to pay from £125 for an off-the-peg, hob-sized panel, and around £300/sq m for bespoke colours and designs.

To add individuality, why not personalise your splashback with your own design? Pimp Your Kitchen (pimpyourkitchen.co.uk) supplies wipe-clean, easy-to-install splashbacks made of specially laminated paper that can be as original as you like.

Most kitchen retailers will offer a templating and fitting service for composites, glass and natural stone.

Take care when templating, particularly when fitting under cupboards or in defined space (for example, areas such as below a cooker hood). If any plug points or other fixings aren't measured properly, you'll have real problems. The old adage, measure twice, fit once, is a good one to go by.

Decorating guides such as the one on Housetohome.co.uk/calculators will help you to work out how many tiles you'll need to fill a particular space.

If you're buying your splashback to makeover your kitchen, then choose a tile fitter or specialist splashback supplier by following up recommendations or searching online and visiting sites such as ratedpeople.com or Which? Local (local.which.co.uk).