

# Defining “Luxury” in Modern Kitchen Design



**AEG**

---

## INTRODUCTION

A common mistake is to define “luxury” as belonging only to wealth and extravagance. This kind of thinking ignores all the different aspects that contribute to the special appeal of luxury design.

At its core, luxury is centred around the idea of exclusivity—the idea that only a very limited number of people will be able to experience what a product, service or brand has to offer. While this feeling is typically evoked through a perception of quality, comfort and elegance, the term “luxury” is evolving to reflect the preferences of today’s conscious consumer.

In the realm of kitchen design, the latest trends in high-end kitchen appliances are reshaping culinary spaces in new and exciting ways. Integrated technology, wellness, sustainability and seamless functionality are some of the key drivers. In addition, more and more homeowners are seeking authenticity from brands and closer alignment with their lifestyle, values and aspirations.

In this whitepaper, we navigate the trends and developments that are defining what “luxury” means in modern kitchen design.

---





## SUSTAINABILITY IS THE NEW LUXURY

The vast majority of consumers say they care about purchasing products that are ethically and environmentally sustainable. According to Deloitte, one in four consumers is prepared to pay more for brands that are committed to environmentally sustainable and ethical business practices.<sup>1</sup> This demand for sustainability is reshaping the luxury industry.

High-end brands are adapting and aligning their values with a stronger sustainability agenda. In recent years, we have seen luxury brands incorporate natural and renewable materials, rethink packaging, make commitments to reducing their carbon footprint, implement ethical labour practices, and create products with longer lifespans.

The fusion of luxury and recycling has enabled high-end brands to utilise recycled materials in products and champion a circular economy without being considered less desirable or “cheap”. In a revealing 2022 study, the use of recycled plastic was stated to have positively affected the decisions of 86% of consumers.<sup>2</sup> The findings demonstrate that those who are environmentally conscious are likely to think that the use of recycled plastics increases product attractiveness.<sup>3</sup>

Natural materials in the luxury world are also receiving more attention. Recent studies show that materials like solid wood and stone are clearly considered more natural and environmentally friendly than synthesised materials.<sup>4</sup> These customer perceptions are leading to the increased use of natural materials in addition to commitments to recycled content.

## THE “QUIET LUXURY” TREND REACHES THE KITCHEN

“Quiet luxury” is the trend towards a low-key approach to luxury where people favour subtlety, minimalism and high quality over visible branding. Forbes Research recently studied the preferences of luxury consumers, finding that 63% of respondents reported that understated luxury pieces are more desirable than visible luxury items.<sup>5</sup>

The idea of quiet luxury is not confined to fashion; the trend has reached the kitchen, wherein homeowners now seek a personalised, sophisticated and refined ambiance. These concepts are manifesting in the current trend of “conceal and reveal,” in which cabinetry is used to create minimalist designs by concealing appliances and only showing them when needed.

The benefit of a “conceal and reveal” kitchen is that the conceptual fit-out of the space is not hampered by

bulky appliances that act as visual disruptions. Instead, appliances are hidden behind cabinetry with a consistent colour scheme and matching finishes. Often, cabinets are custom-made to ensure a precise fit with no unsightly gaps or angles, maintaining seamless and clean design lines throughout the space.

Quiet luxury kitchens are designed to be consistent with the aesthetics of the rest of the living space, creating a harmonious flow throughout the home. This trend reflects the evolution of the kitchen from a purely functional space separated from other parts of the home to a multi-purpose space for cooking, entertaining and relaxing. Timeless colour schemes, such as muted greys and earthy tones, and natural materials add to a sense of peace and calm that goes hand-in-hand with the minimalist aesthetic.

The fusion of luxury and recycling has enabled high-end brands to utilise recycled materials in products and champion a circular economy without being considered less desirable or “cheap”.

## WELLNESS IS TRANSFORMING DESIGN

The focus on wellness was a trend long before COVID-19, but the pandemic made it front of mind for most consumers. As a result, owners are prioritising ways to turn their kitchen into a personal sanctuary that promotes health and wellbeing.

Research by the American Society of Interior Designers found that health and wellness have become the top priority for homebuyers and remodelling clients.<sup>6</sup> Accordingly, it is not enough to make a functional and visually appealing kitchen; designers must also specify products that promote better health outcomes and support the health aspirations of kitchen users.

The most significant impact of the current health trend is on appliance selection. The majority of respondents in a McKinsey survey reported wanting to be healthier, with about 50% across age groups saying that healthy eating is a top priority.<sup>7</sup> This emphasis on healthy food is a driving factor in the rise of steam ovens as the cooking appliance of choice.

Studies indicate that steaming is a method of cooking that can preserve nutrients within food,<sup>8</sup> catering to

the growing demand for healthier cooking options. Consumers are looking for multi-functional ovens (such as combination steam, grill and convection ovens) for greater flexibility when cooking meals.

Another growing concern in the context of wellness is food preservation. Organic produce can be a significant investment, so consumers want convenient ways to preserve its lifespan as well as its nutrient content when the time comes to use it. Fridges with food preservation features, such as sealed crispers with automatic humidity control that maintain the right humidity for fruit and vegetables, are a must-have for modern kitchens.

The current health trend also explains the popularity of biophilic design. It is generally well accepted that incorporating natural elements within a living space supports cognitive function, physical health, and psychological wellbeing. Locally sourced materials, high-quality finishes and the emphasis on sustainability throughout the design and construction process are elevating the design of kitchens and transforming them into spaces for wellness.

## BEYOND MERE FUNCTIONALITY

The integration of technology and functionality is at the forefront of kitchen design, in particular the concept of a “smart” home. To back this up, reports indicate that the size of the global smart kitchen market is projected to reach US\$43 billion by 2027.<sup>9</sup>

Smart kitchens are more than just a collection of appliances that are “connected” to the internet and controlled by a mobile phone. To be meaningful over the long-term, they must have built-in functionality that makes regular tasks easy, allowing users to, for example, directly control the temperatures and cooking times for their oven or view the contents of their fridge remotely.

These trends are not just about upgrading appliances; they are about creating a kitchen experience that is

more intuitive, efficient and convenient. Multi-functional appliances with “all-in-one” features are particularly suited to the modern luxury kitchen, as they enable a minimalist approach while optimising the cooking experience. Some users are opting for commercial-grade appliances to allow them to create restaurant-like dishes in the home environment.

Modern lifestyles are increasingly fast-paced and time-poor, yet expectations for quality remain high. The popularity of designer appliances can be attributed to the demand for convenience, efficiency, and aesthetics. In addition, the rise in customisable options enables homeowners to create spaces that are tailored to their lifestyle and tastes.

## THE POWER OF HERITAGE

The heritage and authenticity of a luxury brand are what underpin its enduring appeal. Heritage can take different forms, whether it’s a brand’s traditional values and design philosophy, its dedication to expert craftsmanship, or its long and storied history. An important aspect of a brand’s authenticity is its ability to stay true to its heritage.

In the high-end appliance sector, AEG is an example of a brand that sets itself apart with a rich heritage of innovation and a unique design philosophy. Founded in Berlin, Germany in 1887, AEG appointed Professor Peter Behrens as an artistic consultant. Professor Behrens is considered the father of industrial design and influencer of the Bauhaus design movement.

Professor Behrens’ work with AEG was the first large-scale demonstration of designing functional yet aesthetically pleasing products. Behrens is famous for his design philosophy emphasising harmony between the function of an object and its design.

“Design is not about decorating functional forms—it is about creating forms that accord with the character of the object and that show new technologies to advantage”  
Peter Behrens

The principles of intelligent technology and responsive design are found in every AEG appliance to this day, ensuring exceptional performance and aesthetic appeal in each and every product.

Before Professor Behrens’ arrival, the growth of AEG originated from a light bulb. The founder of AEG, engineer Emil Rathenau, purchased the rights to produce Thomas Edison’s electric light bulb in Germany in 1883. During the following years, the company experienced incredible growth and committed itself to technological innovation in its products. Soon, AEG expanded production into any kind of electrical equipment, including appliances that made home life easier, such as its first electric oven in 1910 and the first electrically powered fridge in 1912.

AEG has had a proven track record of innovation since its early days. In 1958, the company launched the world’s first fully automated laundry machine, the AEG Lavamat. In 1976, the company unveiled the world’s first fully electronic oven. Less than twenty years later, in 1993, AEG produced CFC-free refrigerators and freezers, again a world first. More recently, in 2015, AEG launched the first domestic sous-vide drawer in Australia.

Today, AEG and its parent company Electrolux continue the tradition established by Professor Behrens—“Perfekt in Form und Funktion”. Based on its reputation for innovation and producing high-performing yet aesthetically appealing products, AEG embodies the values reflected in modern luxury kitchen design.



Heritage can take different forms, whether it's a brand's traditional values and design philosophy, its dedication to expert craftsmanship, or its long and storied history.

---

## ABOUT AEG

AEG appliances come with over 130 years of strong German heritage. The company believes intelligent technology is key to giving Australians exceptional performing appliances that take anything they do at home to the next level, every day. With a dedicated team who look after architects and designers, you will be able to select AEG kitchen or laundry appliances that are designed to be the solution to your project, whatever the size.

## REFERENCES

- <sup>1</sup> Deloitte. "What consumers care about when it comes to sustainability." Deloitte. <https://www2.deloitte.com/uk/en/pages/consumer-business/articles/sustainable-consumer-what-consumers-care-about.html> (accessed 11 March 2024).
- <sup>2</sup> Ruokamo, Enni, Milja Räisänen and Sari Kauppi. "Consumer preferences for recycled plastics: Observations from a citizen survey." *Journal of Cleaner Production*, Vol. 329, Pt. 2 (2022): 134720.
- <sup>3</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>4</sup> Zhang, Y, Y Song and J Luo. "The Effect of Sustainable and Natural Looking on Perceived Aesthetics and Eco-Friendliness in Building Material Evaluation." *Buildings*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (2023): 482.
- <sup>5</sup> Clunn, Nick. "5 Insights Into the Tastes and Choices of Luxury Consumers." *Forbes*. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbes-research/2023/10/16/5-insights-into-the-tastes-and-choices-of-luxury-consumers/?sh=595df724784b> (accessed 11 March 2024).
- <sup>6</sup> American Society of Interior Designers. "ASID COVID-19 Pulse Survey." ASID. <https://www.asid.org/resources/covid-19/pulse-survey> (accessed 11 March 2024).
- <sup>7</sup> Grimmelt, Anne, Jessica Moulton, Chirag Pandya and Nadya Snezhkova. "Hungry and confused: The winding road to conscious eating." *McKinsey*. <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/consumer-packaged-goods/our-insights/hungry-and-confused-the-winding-road-to-conscious-eating> (accessed 11 March 2024).
- <sup>8</sup> Fabbri, Adriana and Guy Crosby. "A review of the impact of preparation and cooking on the nutritional quality of vegetables and legumes." *International Journal of Gastronomy and Food Science*, Vol. 3 (2016): 2-11.
- <sup>9</sup> Sherif, Ahmed. "Smart kitchen market value worldwide 2017-2027." *Statista*. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1015395/worldwide-smart-kitchen-market-revenue> (accessed 11 March 2024).

All information provided correct as of April 2024

Products may vary by country.

The AEG logo is displayed in a bold, red, sans-serif font. The letters 'A', 'E', and 'G' are connected, with the 'E' having a distinctive shape. The logo is positioned in the bottom right corner of the page.