



INTEGRATED APPLIANCES WHY THEY ARE MAKING A COME BACK

In the 1990's integrated appliances were fairly new to the South African market and quite the rage however their main stream popularity was short lived. Few kitchen companies knew how to install them correctly which lead to the appliances often being faulty. Also, being fully imported the products were designed for the European customer and climate and often didn't fulfill local needs and could not cope with our high temperatures and humidity.

A lot has changed over the past few years and the resurgence of integrated appliances in kitchen design seen in Europe has started to filter down to South Africa. Why is it that integrated appliances are now one of the more popular features in modern kitchen design? Simply, because they offer complete solutions. Aesthetically they assist the designer to achieve a seamless design line, practically they allow your kitchen to have a better sense of space, and technologically, they have advanced to cope with climates outside of Europe and offer better options capacity wise than before.

The current trends in kitchen design that we are seeing coming out of Europe are very much focused on clean lines and minimalism – less is more. This clean, modern look is uncluttered by fancy door profiles, door handles and counter tops filled with small appliances and obje'dar. Free standing appliances like fridges, dishwashers and washing machines are a huge obstacle in achieving this look and feel. These appliances break the clean lines and continuity of the kitchen.

Integrated appliance are designed expressly to be hidden from view and encased in a kitchen cupboard. To the untrained eye the kitchen will appear to have none of these major appliances in it at all. The kitchen looks undisturbed by the practicality of a fridge or a dishwasher. The inclusion of integrated appliances adds to

the kitchen design by not only enhancing the aesthetic but also by increasing the sense of space. This makes them a perfect addition to a compact kitchen where a sense of space needs to be maximised.

Installing an integrated appliance correctly is vital and not every kitchen company can do it. This is why it is important to select a company experienced in working with integrated design. There are no short cuts here. A kitchen company skilled in working with integrated appliances will be producing a quality product and they will charge accordingly. Don't expect to do an integrated kitchen on a small budget. It is vital that the kitchen company's installers have been properly trained in the installation of the specific integrated appliance in question. Get advice from the appliance manufacturer or retailer as to which companies have sent their staff to the manufacturer for training. A poor installation can stop the appliance operating correctly which will lead to a lot of service calls. It is important to remember that if the installation is not correct the appliance manufacturer's warrantee or guarantee is void as the incorrect installation will probably be the primary cause for the unit faulting.

Integrated refrigeration is now available in a variety of configurations meaning that no matter how big or small you kitchen or your family you will get integrated refrigeration to suit your needs.

The separate fridge and freezer units will allow you to put a side by side configuration together. If you prefer the idea of your fridge space on top it is common to see two combi units installed side by side. It is especially beneficial that you can reverse the doors on integrated refrigeration meaning that no matter what your combination your doors will open from the centre in opposite directions. Integrated freezers are also now available in frost free meaning that there is no risk to the cupboard unit when you have to defrost the freezer.



It is recommended not to install an integrated fridge or freezer right next to another heat generating appliance such as an oven. An integrated appliance generates a lot of heat which builds up inside the cabinet. If it is installed right next to another heat generating appliance the dual heat build-up will become too much for the fridge's compressor. The heat could also damage your carcassing. Our recommendation would be to put some insulation between the carcasses of the two appliances. A sheet of asbestos is commonly used.

The placement of an integrated appliance in its cupboard casing is all important. If not positioned correctly the doors may not seal correctly. In a fridge this puts added pressure on the compressor and thermostats and can lead to icing up. In a dishwasher it can lead to leaking and water damage to the kitchen. Your integrated unit should come with all the necessary hardware to attached the cupboard door to the appliance so look after it when you unpack.

Ventilation of the cabinetry is also vital. Without adequate ventilation the appliance overheats and



so does the cabinet which can damage both. Some integrated appliances are supplied with venting grids which have to be installed in the kick plate area. This must be used and should never be covered. The cabinet must vent back out to the kitchen so that the hot air is expelled from the cabinet. This is usually done at the back of the cabinet through the use of a false back and a chimney style vent that is open to the kitchen at the top of the cupboard unit.

Integrated laundry is also available, although integrated tumble dryers are rare. Not all homes have a scullery or separate laundry where a washing machine and tumble dryer can be hidden away. Because there is often a space constraint if you don't have a separate laundry a combination washer dryer is also available in many integrated ranges. The doors on the laundry products are also reversible to ensure the most ergonomic installation.

An integrated dishwasher probably offers the most options to a kitchen designer. You get fully integrated models (where you can't see the unit at all), semi integrated (where the control panel is visible) and deco door models where the unit is fitted with a decorative door which will then look like a feature door in your kitchen. Different configurations are also available with small half sized units and units that pull out like a drawer. The added benefit of an integrated dishwasher is how quiet it is. The installation into a cupboard adds noise insulation making integrated dishwashers very quiet and unobtrusive.

Hidden from view integrated appliances never date and won't dictate the look and feel of your kitchen. If installed by a trained professional they will be a valuable investment in that sleek modern kitchen you have dreamed of and saved for.

With thanks to the following KSA members:

