



## EASY WAYS TO A GREENER KITCHEN

**We have all become more aware of how to improve our lifestyles to ensure we are leaving a little less of an ecological footprint. Most of us are trying to do our bit by reducing the amount of single-use plastic we use. Recycling a bit, and maybe even doing some composting with food waste – is this enough though? How can we make our physical kitchen space a little more environmentally friendly?**

If you are planning a new kitchen from scratch, it is obviously far easier to make green choices when it comes to selecting your materials. You should opt for products that come from suppliers with an environmental statement, and who are looking to reduce their footprint. Choose materials with longevity and that will clean easily with natural, green products. Greenstar SA is a certification body that will help you identify materials that embrace recycling, and board that is low in formaldehyde. However, if you have had your kitchen for some time, making it a little greener requires some extra thought and a bit of effort.

The simplest place to start would be with recycling. Yes, it can be a bit of a pain, if we are honest. It takes time to do it properly. Fitting recycling bins into your kitchen, whether you do it at the design phase, or retrospectively by adapting existing cupboard units, can make this seem less of a chore. Firstly, having the various bins installed in a cupboard unit will stop you falling over freestanding units and keep the mess contained out of sight.

Secondly, having bins that facilitate separation of food, plastic and other waste that are easily accessible while you are cooking and cleaning, will take a lot of the drudge out of recycling. It is true that bins inserted into your kitchen cupboards take up valuable storage space; however, this could be the motivation you've needed to sort through your goodies and weed out the old and mismatched crockery and Tupperware you no longer use. There are various options of inset bins, specifically geared towards re-cycling, and the range available in South Africa from suppliers is constantly growing and improving in both quality and durability.



A fabulous addition that is extremely popular abroad, to combat food waste, is a sink garbage disposal system. These can be retro fitted to most sinks. Their efficacy and reliability has improved over the years and they are no longer as noisy as

the original models. Do your research and make an informed investment on this unit.

Clean water is a commodity. Water filtration devices can be installed or fitted to your kitchen tap – depending on make and model. This will facilitate an ongoing supply of pure, clean water and reduce your need to buy bottled water. Remember it is vital that you do the required maintenance and remember to replace the filters regularly.



Water and electricity usage, and availability, in South Africa are a contentious issue. Many provinces have dire water shortages and load shedding is an ongoing reality for all. It has become necessary that your kitchen (and home) adapt in ways to save both. If your appliances are on the older side and you are looking to save on electricity, water and ultimately money, you should consider replacing them. While the initial outlay will be steep, the long-term gains will aid both your pocket and the environment.

When selecting your dishwasher and washing machine, look for options that are both energy and water efficient with A+++ ratings. Models with an 'economy' or 'half load' function will also help you make savings all round.

It is important that your tumble dryer, oven and fridge/freezer are also energy efficient as all three use a fair amount of electricity. Technology in cooling and refrigeration has made great gains in recent years. Fridges are now available on the market with quick access points to limit you opening the fridge door for long periods of time. They are also equipped with internal compartments with varied settings to facilitate more efficient storage and keeping groceries fresher for longer, reducing unnecessary food waste.

Maintenance and cleaning of your appliances needs to be carried out on a more regular basis than we think to ensure their electrical efficiency and reduce energy consumption. Check that your oven and fridge doors close properly (particularly if you have an integrated fridge). Ensure that your gasket or door seal is not perished and is fitted

properly. This will stop cold, or hot, air (respectively) from escaping and the element or compressor working overtime. Giving your fridge element (at the back of the fridge) a good clean can also assist in making it more efficient. Once all that dust and gunk is gone it will be able to operate more cost effectively. If you are unsure how to do this consult your user manual or enlist the help of a registered maintenance provider.

Using your hob correctly can also make you more 'fuel efficient'. Ensure your pot is the appropriate size for the burner or demarcated area. Using a pot too big or too small wastes electricity either by the element heating an unused area – if the pot is too small, or by the element having to work overtime to heat an area much larger than what it is made for – if the pot is too big.

An easy way to be electricity wise, is to change all your light bulbs to LED. As with appliance replacement, there is an initial cost, but the gains far outweigh these costs longterm.



If you have the budget available, it is possible to replace your existing worktops and cabinet doors with more environmentally friendly options. It is important to do the maths and due diligence first though. Depending on how your existing kitchen was made and installed, and the quality of the carcassing, it may turn out that a whole brand-new kitchen would only be marginally more than making the proposed upgrades.

All these changes in your kitchen are well and good, but ultimately, they need to be accompanied by a continual change in attitude and awareness in our general routines and lifestyles – how we eat, what we buy, maintenance of dripping taps and the turning off of lights when not in use – to have a true impact.

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