



# THE SHAKER DOOR – THE KITCHEN'S TIMELESS PARTNER

Whether it is traditional country, contemporary country or French Provençale, the shaker door is the making of all these designs. It has proven itself to be a timeless part of kitchen design, adaptable to various aesthetics, both traditional and modern. Here is all you need to know about this staple of kitchen design if you are considering a shaker aesthetic for your new kitchen.

Shaker kitchen aesthetic was invented in the mid-18th century by the Shaker religious community in America. The Shakers believed in simplicity and functionality, and their kitchen doors reflected these principles with their clean lines and minimalist design. This is probably why the aesthetic has endured and adapted so well over time.

A shaker door typically has a flat central area surrounded by a raised rectangular frame. The two vertical sections of the frame are called stiles and the two horizontal sections are known as rails. It can be made in veneer, solid wood, a combination of the two, or MDF (medium fibre density board) that is either painted or in its more modern application, wrapped.

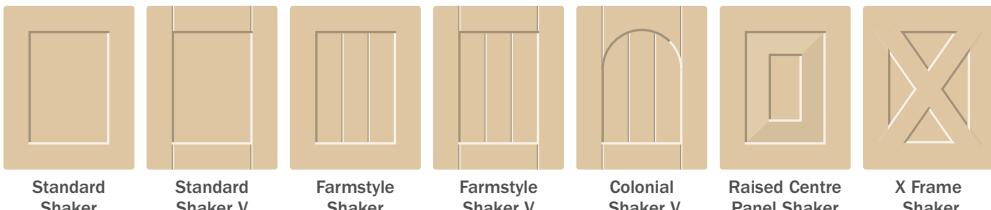
Currently most shaker doors are made from MDF. This is because the cost of solid and veneered timber has gone up so much over the years. The MDF base panel is typically 16mm thick. The

frames are either 3mm or 6mm MDF, depending on the style. A specialized contact adhesive is used to bond the frame to the panel together.

## There are various ways to construct a shaker door:

- **The 5-piece door** - this is the traditional construction method and is usually executed in solid timber, veneer or a combination of the two. Traditionally timbers like pine, cherry, or maple were used but today we see more robust timbers like oak and birchwood being used. It remains a popular choice but is costly due to the materials it is made from.
- **One piece door** – The pattern or profile is routed or pocketed out of a solid piece of MDF. This creates the illusion of a centre panel and frame. This is a more labor-intensive and costly method of construction due to the CNC process used to create the illusion and the additional sanding required to ensure the MDF is smooth enough to take the paint or wrap foil without showing bumps under the surface. The main advantages of this method are that there are no joints on the door. This means that over time no cracks will appear on the surface requiring maintenance and respraying. The possible disadvantage of this method is that in taking away from the board's structure by routering it, it can be prone to warping or bowing due to an imbalance of tension in the material. This is usually seen when the doors are exposed to certain environmental factors like high humidity.
- **Two piece door or built-up door** – here you apply a 3,2mm or 6mm MDF frame to a 16mm MDF door. The frame is shaped to create the Shaker profile, giving a simple, flat-panel door with a raised frame. This method is most favoured for the wrapped finished shaker door as there is less sanding involved and the wrapping process assists in holding the door construction together.





## Other than the traditional framed shaker there are variations to the theme:

- **Farmstyle Shaker** – where lines are added to the middle of the door for a rustic look.
- **Tudor/Colonial Shaker** – normally available in both plain and farmstyle
- **Raised Centre Panel Shaker** – Only available from some manufacturers, this has a double-frame.
- **X Frame** – This is a traditional Shaker outer frame with an “X” design inside.

Most commonly we see the shaker door in a painted finish. With the vast array of paint colours available, this option gives the client a vast array of options to choose from when putting their colour scheme together. Here the MDF is treated with a primer or base coat then normally spray painted with multiple layers of paint ensuring that the edges of the door have multi-layer protection. These doors can also be hand painted giving a more rustic look. It is important to remember that the quality of the painted aesthetic will vary on the quality of paint and the method of application. Machine painted products tend to offer a higher quality final finish than those painted by hand. It is vital that once painted, the doors are given time to ‘cure’. This is the drying process. If they are not given sufficient time to cure correctly in the right conditions the finish can be compromised. It is in the painted finish where, over time, the impact of a less professionally made and painted door will be seen. As the door breathes and moves with the atmosphere in the kitchen, the paint can start to crack along the joint lines revealing that there is movement in the door itself. This only happens in the five or two-piece construction method, not in the one-piece door. It is also important to know that the quality of the final finish is also dependent on the quality of the MDF used. Low grade board can result in poor paint adhesion and lead to chipping and bubbling of the paint.

Wrap finishing of the shaker door has made the look much more accessible price wise. Here the routed MDF door is bonded to a wrap foil (a sheet of vinyl) which gets stretched around the front facing part of the door. The best method for this is when it is done through the application of both heat and extreme pressure. If only applied through heat, then there is a greater chance of the foil shrinking or delaminating over time. It is vital to use a good adhesive in this process. With wrap foils now available in more contemporary finishes, such as super matt and fingerprint-resistant, the wrapped shaker door can now offer a newer, more modern look and feel.



The advent of the Contemporary country aesthetic has given the shaker door a new lease of life into a more modern aesthetic – where the traditional shaker is paired with more modern clean lines, colour and other materials. This allows the look to pay homage to the past but in a very forward-thinking way. Through this aesthetic there has also been a move to adapting the traditional door design by reducing the size of the frame from 70mm to 25mm making the overall look and feel more streamlined and modern.

If you are giving thought to the shaker aesthetic, you will not regret it. Providing you select your colour well the design will remain timeless and add an aesthetic with mass appeal to your home.

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