

The great indoors

Annie Gatti plunders design tricks from a family room that brings the garden right inside. Photographs by Marianne Majerus

The fact that Mandy and Tim Durham's London home had no original features was a liberation. "I had no guilt about knocking down the back and starting again," Mandy says.

Mandy, a food stylist and writer, project managed the redesign, the centrepiece of which was to be a big, light, open-plan family room. She had a clear wishlist for the room: a sitting area with a fireplace; a compact kitchen, with plenty of storage; an eating area with a table big enough for 12, looking out on to the garden; and an office, which could be shut off. Most of all, the room should let in the garden.

"I was brought up in the countryside and found it depressing to be in a dark sitting room. I wanted the outside to be part of the inside. If it's pouring with rain, I want to see it; if the sky is blue, I want to see it."

Mandy wanted the room's entire back wall to be glass, to give maximum light, which is why she chose architect Simon Gill. "I had seen a house he designed with a

two-storey glass extension, so knew he'd be on the right wavelength."

For Mandy it was essential that the kitchen did not spill out into the rest of the room, so she opted for a stainless-steel island unit to create a visual divider between cooking area and lounge. She fronted it with turquoise glass to echo the colour of the floor-to-ceiling cupboards on the far wall. "I probably wouldn't have dared paint them such a bright colour if I didn't have children, but I didn't want the whole room to be too sophisticated, for the girls' sake." The garden, too, was designed with the children in mind. "I wanted it to be somewhere the girls would use, so I insisted on some lawn, even though it's hard to keep it looking good, especially now we have a dog."

Garden designer Claire Mee completed the scene with a symmetrical layout, including clipped box balls, a *Magnolia grandiflora*, olive trees and star jasmines on the walls. **Simon Gill, 020-7610 6874, simongillarchitects.co.uk**
Claire Mee Garden Design, 020-7385 8614, clairemee.co.uk



The kitchen area to the left of the dining area is separated off with a stainless-steel island. Putting it on legs gives the impression of free-standing furniture

The absence of supporting pillars brings the garden even closer. But finding a glazier to provide such a large piece (4.6m by 2.5m) of laminated glass was hard (fraserglaze.com)

The white oak flooring, off-white walls and Arne Jacobsen pastel Butterfly chairs keep up the bright and breezy look

A trench heater set into the floor ensures the glazed end of the room stays warm without interrupting the view

The garden was symmetrically designed to go with the modern room, but included traditional elements such as roses, fruit trees, wisteria and climbers scrambling up pergolas at the back

Extending an extra 3.5m beyond the original structure enabled the Durhams to brighten the dining area with a large roof light

A bank of 2.2m cupboards stores children's toys. The turquoise colour was chosen to stop the room seeming too 'grown-up'