



MOVERS AND SHAKERS

Timeless and effortlessly stylish, Olive & Barr truly celebrates the glory of British craftsmanship.

Sharon Martin visited their new Malvern showroom for some kitchen inspiration

Olive & Barr was born out of a need for quality British craftsmanship, attention to detail and an intuition for kitchen design. Founder Al Bruce began his illustrious career 25 years ago, studying to be a cabinet maker at college. From humble beginnings, his natural skill in the craft of cabinetry and keen business acumen saw him quickly rise up through the ranks of the handmade kitchen industry.

“I have always been interested in interior design and my creative side led me into a furniture craft course at college where I trained to be cabinet maker. I learned traditional joinery techniques and how to produce the best quality timber products. From there I worked my way up through the kitchen industry, gaining valuable experience and a wealth of knowledge along the way.”

Al finally opened his own kitchen company, Olive and Barr in 2018 after being approached by the founder of Beswick Stone



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in Cirencester. “John had just opened a showroom for Beswick Stone and asked me if I would like to open a kitchen company upstairs. It was the perfect collaboration providing all kitchen renovation components under one roof, so of course I said yes.”

Al decided to focus on shaker style kitchens, in particular because of their clever design and thoughtful touches such as soft-close doors (a feature rarely seen on an in-frame kitchen) and the luxurious and extensive range of colourways.

“Beauty rests on utility’ is the ethos upon which shaker design is based, an ethos which embodies the art of simplicity, functionality and fine craftsmanship. This resonates with our philosophy of creating hand-crafted beautiful kitchens that will never go out of fashion and will stand the test of time.”

All Olive and Barr cabinetry is handcrafted in the Cotswolds, and their shaker kitchens look and feel lavish, but with a price tag which is beguilingly low. Being a relative newcomer to the shaker kitchen industry,

Olive & Barr has boundless verve and a deep-rooted passion for customer care.

“We are already proving to be quite the industry disruptor by providing an impeccable product at (seemingly) impossibly competitive prices,” said Al.

Harnessing the time-honoured traditions of yesteryear whilst simultaneously embracing the technological developments of the future drives success. Olive and Barr handmade kitchens effortlessly combine traditional joinery techniques with modern technologies so that you receive a reassuringly iconic shaker kitchen, without having to relinquish the cutting edge “bells and whistles” of a contemporary kitchen.

A responsible company with sustainability at its core, Olive and Barr workshops and artisans are based in the Cotswolds and use carefully-sourced materials which are both traceable and accountable. “We know that little touches such as removing and recycling all packaging after installation is important to you, so it’s important to us too. Our materials



are accredited by the FSC (an international organisation dedicated to promoting responsible management of the world’s forests), and we do our bit for the planet (and keep overheads low) by using the timber off cuts to heat our workshops. We do everything in our power to ensure that our company is one to be proud of, and one which our clients are proud to be affiliated with.” ➔



Al Believes his company offers “the best quality, best value handmade shaker kitchens you can buy in the UK today.” That’s quite a claim. As a cabinet maker and designer, Al recommends visiting at least three showrooms to get three different plans and comparative quotes. “You will be surprised at how much they might vary. We offer a free design service instore or we can arrange a home visit.”

Of course, Al’s kitchen will be one of Olive and Barr’s finest, won’t it?

“Yes of course. I have a stunning dark grey painted kitchen in ‘Nightcap’ with a beautiful marble worktop just like the one we have in the Cirencester showroom.”

Over the years, having worked on hundreds of kitchens, the odd one stands out. “I’ve had a client asking for a dog bed to be incorporated into the kitchen island, which is actually a very practical idea,” Al tells me.

Kitchens are no longer just a place to cook, they have become the hub of a home, a space for entertaining and the kitchen island is a design feature that’s a must-have for most Olive and Barr customers.

“It’s the perfect place for guests to gather and chat to the host. It’s also extremely practical, in terms of providing extra storage.”

And the kitchen trends for 2019?

“We’ve coined a trend the Country Grand, with floor to ceiling cabinets (rather than wall cabinets) which provide masses of storage. Luxurious materials such as granite and marble are used for the worktop and splashback. The lighting is glamorous too – think lanterns or chandeliers.”

In terms of colour, green is taking over from dark blue as a key colour for 2019. “Our Hunter Green painted kitchen looks both dramatic and luxurious when used in a Country Grand scheme, while when it’s paired with wooden worktops it takes on a more rustic look. Customers are favouring brass handles over chrome and brass or copper taps and light fittings.”

Time for a kitchen makeover methinks, and so another trip to Olive and Barr. **L**

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