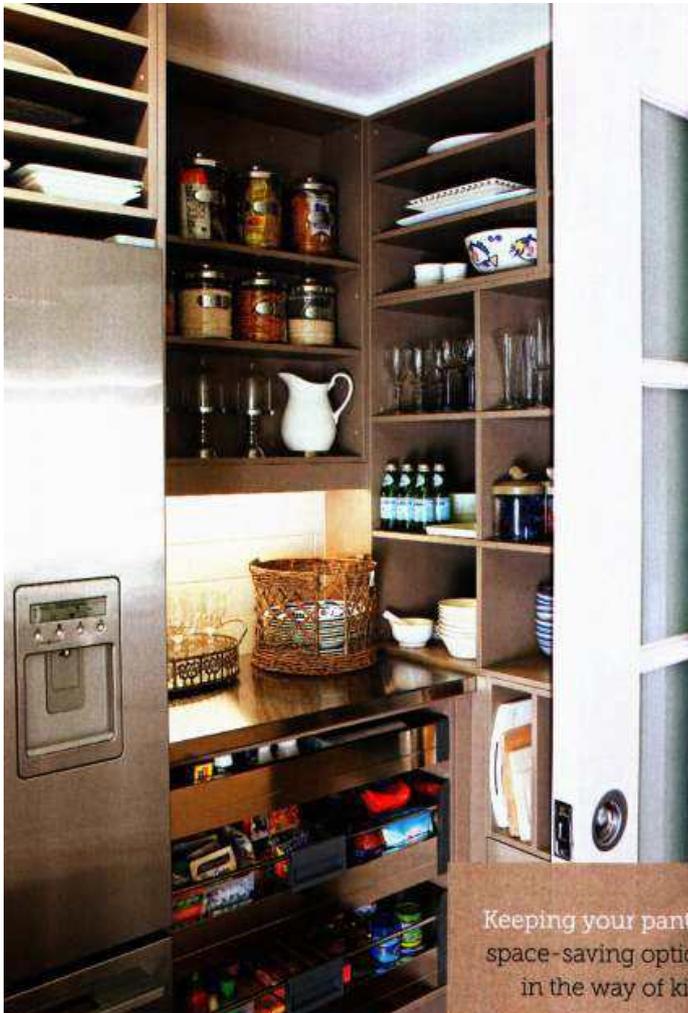




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KEEP COSTS DOWN by opting for inexpensive materials, as this area won't be on display. Laminate benchtops are a fraction of the cost of other finishes and can be closely colour matched to your main bench, ensuring continuity of style. "Earthy, neutral tones work wonderfully and can be designed with the same edge profile as stone," says interior designer Eileen Middleton of Eileen Middleton Interiors.

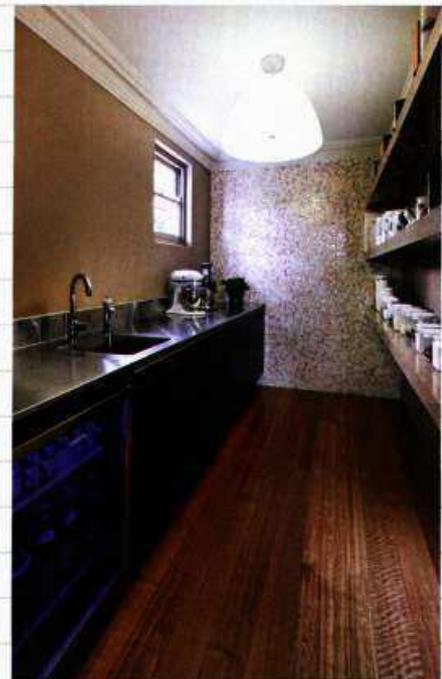
OPT FOR OPEN SHELVING over cupboards to stretch your budget further. If you prefer cupboards, try melamine door fronts, which are cheaper than laminate, polyurethane or timber veneer fronts. "They are hard-wearing and easy to clean, and finishing them with matching PVC edging ensures they don't swell up like Weetbix when exposed to a bit of moisture," says designer Erika Forster of White Door Design.

PACK IN THE STORAGE by taking shelving to the ceiling and organising the contents by frequency of use. Glass jars or stackable square containers with locking lids are ideal for bulk foods like cereals and pasta, wire baskets are good for under-bench storage and tricky corners can be utilised with pull-out cupboard systems such as Blum's Space Corner.

Keeping your pantry off-limits is as simple as installing a door. A great space-saving option is a cavity sliding door or a bifold. "They don't get in the way of kitchen activity," says Martine Blair of Zooi Design.

MAP OUT YOUR STORAGE NEEDS. "To prevent losing items at the back of the pantry, opt for a U-shaped design with shallow shelves no deeper than 300mm," says Martine Blair of Zooi Design. "For smaller items like herbs and sauces, aim for a shelf width of 200mm." Open shelving, as seen in this Porter Davis design (right), is a great option for condiments, salt and pepper, which can be seen at a glance for easy access.

GOOD TASK LIGHTING is a must. "A great way to achieve this is with LED ribbon lighting fitted to the underside of shelving, above your work surfaces," says Erika. Consider using a 'micro switch', where a trip catch attached to the door frame turns the light on when the door is open. This Sydney Kitchens space (far right) boosts light and ventilation by pairing a window with a pendant light.



PHOTOGRAPHY (TOP) JOHN DOWNS; *WATER EFFICIENCY LABELLING AND STANDARDS (WELS); STAIRS RATE WATER EFFICIENCY FROM 0-6, WITH 6 STARS BEING THE MOST EFFICIENT. VISIT WATERATING.GOV.AU.