

Extending across the centuries

Russian For Fish breathes life back into an Edwardian home



Chestnut Road by Russian for Fish. Photography by Pete Landers.

In Edwardian times, the kitchen was for cooking, not living in. All the grandeur, space and decorative detail went into the other rooms of the house; the kitchen was all about tick-box functionality and little more. These days, it's very different. Kitchens are the hub of day-to-day life, where families come together to dine; where the kids gather to do their homework; where the parents go foraging for merlot after the little ones are in bed. It's the heart of the family.

RUSSIAN FOR FISH

PRESS RELEASE, 18 August 2017

The kitchen of a five-bedroom link-detached house on **Chestnut Road**, West Norwood, was a heart outside of a body when **Russian For Fish** first saw it. The homeowners, a couple with a young child, were delighted with their spacious, welcoming and perfectly proportioned family home, but less than ecstatic about the kitchen, which was small, rather dark and, in true Edwardian style, seemed cut-off from the soul of the house.

The couple asked **Russian For Fish** to expand and remodel the space, to bring it into the flow of the house and to enhance its connection to the adjacent garden. They also needed additional storage space and a dedicated utility area – without undertaking significant (and expensive) structural alterations.

Both clients brought different ideas to the design process. One worked in the heritage sector and, naturally, had an interest in preserving the Edwardian character of the house. The other, a financial advisor, took a modern, minimalist and function-first approach to aesthetics. Russian For Fish had to develop a solution that harmonised both tastes.



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'Russian for Fish came up with some really inspirational ideas and challenged us to be brave. Yet they really listened to the brief so we had what we wanted from a utility perspective but the end result was far more beautiful than we could have imagined.'

– Louise Fuller, Chestnut Road client

Over the course of six months (which also included the renovation of the bathrooms, the creation of an additional ensuite, and improving ventilation throughout the property), **Russian For Fish** widened the building's rear outrigger to create more space, using reclaimed brick for the repositioned walls to create a seamless join and installing a long rectangular skylight in the new ceiling.

The freshly expanded kitchen and dining area was linked to the rear reception room with a large sliding door – a bridge between old and new. This created a versatile connection to the rest of the house, allowing it to become effectively open-plan as desired, while maintaining the building's traditional footprint.



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The most dramatic aspect of the transformation, however, was the addition of a set of sliding glass doors framed in powder-coated aluminium – a 5m corner wall of glass that fills the kitchen with sunlight, offers an unbroken sightline into the garden and, when the sun shines, can be slid aside to entirely dissolve the boundary between indoors and out.

'We wanted to maximise the connection to the garden and fill the rear of the house with natural light. To create an open corner is structurally quite a challenge, particularly with the added weight of the large skylight above – the slightest miscalculation could cause all the glass to shatter. But, given the impressive effect the doors have, whether open or shut, it was well worth the structural gymnastics!'

– Nilesh Shah, co-director, Russian for Fish



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Once the shell of the new space was in place, **Russian For Fish** set about creating an interior that married clean-lined modernity with traditional features. Clean-lined spray-finished MDF joinery is contrasted with the raw mod-industrial materiality of concrete worktops, while stained-oak stained parquet throughout the ground floor and reclaimed tile provide a complementary nod to Edwardian design heritage.

Completed just in time to coincide with the birth of the clients' second child, the result is a seamless union between old and new, inside and out. It's a modern-day interpretation of an Edwardian home – with its heart in the kitchen, where it belongs.

For more images or information about Russian for Fish's Chestnut Road project and practice, please contact me (Jodi Moss) at jodi@zetteler.co.uk or on +44 (0)7910 705147.

About Chestnut Road

Architect Russian For Fish

Contractor Create Bespoke

Engineer Krige Consulting

Photographer Pete Landers

Glazed Sliding Door Ultraline

Concrete Worktop Mortise Concrete

About Russian for Fish

Russian for Fish is an award-winning London-based architectural and design practice founded by RIBA-chartered architect Pereen d'Avoine in 2006. Now run by Pereen and co-director Nilesh Shah, the company works on extension and new-build projects for both residential and commercial clients, and is especially adept at transforming compact spaces. Their work is characterised by simplified material palettes, contemporary and minimalist detailing, and a cohesive, sympathetic approach to surroundings.

The Russian word for fish is pronounced 'RIBA'.

russianforfish.com
