

# Haute cuisine

When a London designer insisted on a kitchen with a wood-burning stove and solar panels, there was only one place for it — in a hut on the roof, reports LISA HELMANIS

Sitting in Morag Myerscough's rough-hewn cherrywood kitchen, staring out at acres of blue sky, one almost expects to hear the low rumble of a moose call or the twittering of an exotic dawn chorus. Only when you wander onto the adjoining roof terrace and catch sight of the jagged skyline of London's Clerkenwell, is the illusion of a grown-up treehouse shattered.

"I had always wanted to build a kitchen on the roof as an escape," Myerscough explains, "with a wood-burning stove and solar panels — somewhere you could see the sky and feel like you had been taken somewhere else."

It is unsurprising to discover that the man who designed her kitchen in the sky, Scott Batty of Hüt Architecture, has spent time working on VSO projects building timber-framed houses in Canada.

Myerscough, a designer, had also seen a cabin in France that inspired her. "We were definitely coming from a similar place, but he would have made it even more rough and ready if I'd let him," she recalls.

The overall effect is of a wild rural retreat, a genuine surprise when you climb the other three floors of the slender 1890s town house.

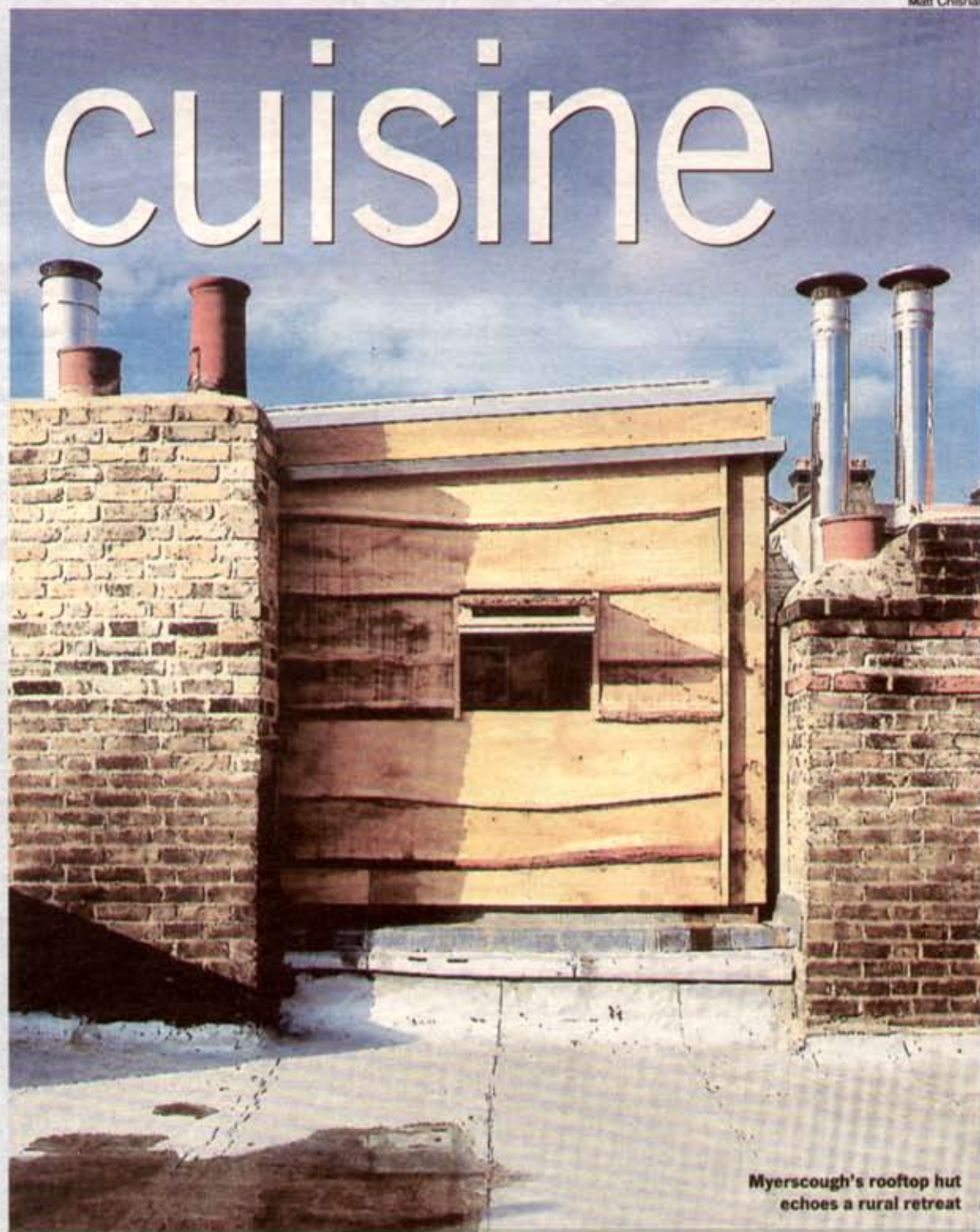
"The original kitchen space on the ground floor was dingy and dark," she says. When she moved in, in 1997, Myerscough had to gut the place and call in architects. "I asked them to make a real staircase up to the roof that meant I could extend properly. I always had plans to build something when I had the money."

Myerscough decided how the kitchen would work, where everything went and details such as having drawers rather than cupboards. "Scott would have even had gas canisters for the hob, but that was a little too authentic for me," she laughs. "I couldn't cope with the idea of hauling them up the stairs."

The main source of heat is a Danish wood-burning stove, while the slender hidden dishwasher is a nod to modern living. Everything had to be hoisted up the front of the three-storey house. "But the biggest challenge," says Batty, "was having to design and plan everything so tightly as the project is so small. It was like designing the inside of a caravan or car, every door swing, the amount that a drawer could be opened, every inch was vital."

Batty chose rough-sawn green oak, which came with its own problems. "Trying to get the builders to understand that we wanted the

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Myerscough's rooftop hut echoes a rural retreat



The interior was meticulously planned to make use of the tiny space



outside to be 'raw' was a nightmare," he laughs. "The pieces of wood they were throwing away thinking they were the worst were the ones we liked the best!"

The project, which took about three months, cost £70,000 in total and was completed last August. Myerscough hasn't had her house valued since — but says adding value was never the

point. "Now I can see the sky," Myerscough reckons there are two main things to understand about your budget when planning a building project: "First, that you are probably going to go over it. So second, get to grips with your scheme. If you understand what's happening you can change elements if you need to, using cheaper materials. If you know what

things cost, you won't be unpleasantly surprised."

Batty and his partner Andrew Whiting created their company, Hüt, with a concern for sustainability. All the materials in this build are natural, and the walls are even insulated with sheep's wool. Myerscough has felt the benefit, saying: "It's meant to be healthier for you by creating

breathing walls and I've definitely had fewer colds. And even though the green oak cladding needs maintaining, I feel it's worth it for the totally natural feel it creates."

Green energy is also provided by three solar panels on the roof. Another success are the large glass doors, which swing open to her neat herb garden, so there is little division between inside and out.

Having a private kitchen in the sky has become even more useful since Myerscough opened her gallery and shop called Her House, operating from the ground floor of her home where the original kitchen was. She sells interior products by new designers and one-off vintage pieces.

Now, she often begins and ends her day in her cabin. "Because of the glass roof, even on a gloomy day you have light, which is great for shaking off that feeling of enclosure you can get in London. If I don't get up here at least once a day, I feel cheated." All that's missing is a burly lumberjack to make the coffee. Her House (020 7689 0606, [www.herhouse.uk.com](http://www.herhouse.uk.com)) is open Wednesday-Friday from midday-7pm at 30D Great Sutton Street, London EC1; Hüt, 020 7729 3699, [www.hutarchitecture.com](http://www.hutarchitecture.com)