

Coffee time



Let go of cold grey and white and embrace warmer, trending brown, writes **Carol O'Callaghan**

JUST as the trend pollsters are showing colour at us for 2023 (it's cutesy pastels for spring, folks) along comes the brown kitchen. This will seriously disturb anyone who has inherited from a prior occupant a series of dark wooden units with dust-catching beading, and looking to replace it, or applying a paint treatment with updated handles.

Mind you, I'm all for chocolate accents and warm neutrals around the house, in general, after the brainwashing that brilliant white, clinical spaces were the only chic, and I'm really liking the throwback to 1970s squishy brown sofas playing to our love of that groovy decade.

Besides, who doesn't want a bit of earthiness to feel grounded in a world of social upheaval? More so, who doesn't love a snap of dark chocolate, rich roast coffee, and a cuttle with a brown teddy bear?

As it happens, a trip to London over Christmas led me to luxury boutique paint brand Francesca's Paints.

Drawn in by one of their colours, Love and Squallor (the alluring name is a citation

of a JD Salinger short story) it takes the darker elements of brown and gives it a light touch with a rosy undertone which I instantly loved.

The founder of the brand, Francesca Wezel, says that, in her opinion, choosing a colour should never be trend-based but instead a choice of what makes you feel good, at ease, and relaxed.

"Brown has a moody, sophisticated feel and adds great depth to interiors," she says. "It pairs wonderfully with light or bright pink, dark blue, and off-white, as well as sandy tones and terracotta."

She also maintains it's perfect for hallways and drawing rooms, and would work well as a background colour for artwork.

So, will this herald the end of art gallery walls saturated in grey? But she puts her money where her mouth is, too, adding: "In fact, I like brown so much that my living room is chocolate brown and I feel that I am enveloped and protected by it."

Perhaps you don't want to go all out and commit to brown walls, even with other colours as undertones, so try the stylist's best

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friend for introducing any colour in a low-key way with accessories and easily changeable items around the home like table, kitchen, and bedroom linens and bathroom towels. Rugs, too, and occasional furniture all make us a bit braver taking the plunge into new colour.

Next Home launches the Parallel collection in February, which plays to the warmed-up minimalist look where colour-phobes can get their chocolate and coffee accents in without too much commitment — so expect velvet cushions and delicate tan detailing in rugs to take the chill out of pale upholstery and add warmth to washed-out walls.

B&M Home goes all out on beige bedspreads and sheets (£15.99), colouring them in with powder blue pillowcases (£22.99) and royal blue throw blankets (from £35) for a spring theme.

The classic combination reminds me of something Kevin McCloud, design guru and presenter of Channel 4's *Grand Designs*, said in his book *Colour Now: An Expert Guide to Choosing Colour For Your Home*.

A kitchen scheme using Cohiba Brown from The Cuban Collection by Francesca Paints uses texture and pattern in the decorative features.

"There is a wonderful relationship between brown and blue," he states. "Frankly, it is better than the one between brown and green — colours that argue for the same territory on the planet. But sky and earth just seem to get on."

So, what about the brown kitchen? Are we tempted? The answer could be no if we were stuck with a repeat of the dull brown cupboard doors of childhood, and anyone looking to do a paint job to update a clapped-out 90s assembly of units is unlikely to replace dark brown wood with dark brown paint.

But just as 1970s bell-bottomed jeans got a second outing for a new generation as the revised bootcut leg, the brown kitchen has all the potential to be a wow for the 21st century. Ikea is buying into it with gusto, using varying wood grains and sleek handles in their cupboard fronts and taking it up another notch by using a chevron wood pattern on wall units.

"The visual impact is almost 3D," as their interior designer Chiara Effroi Lutteri says. "It adds a touch of something special, but still melts in with the rest of the room."