



universal expert
DESIGN - SEBASTIAN CONRAN - LONDON

STYLISH PRACTICALITY

Having created everything from baby's drinking cups to a 3D printer, and with one of the most famous surnames in design, Sebastian Conran has become one of the UK's most renowned designers. Following in his father's footsteps – iconic British designer Sir Terrance Conran – Sebastian has forged a hugely successful career in product design, creating pieces that place equal emphasis on both elegance and functionality.

Universal Expert by Sebastian Conran creates thoughtful and innovative pieces of kitchenware and has fast become an Occa-Home favourite. With each piece performing in original and exciting new ways, as well as adding a serious dose of style to the kitchen, they are irresistible to use. We were lucky enough to catch up with Sebastian Conran to find out where his innovations come from...

"Design is definitely part of the family culture and I would say I have design in the blood," Sebastian tells us. "No one would think it was unusual if a butcher's son wanted to be a butcher, or a cobbler's son wanted to be a cobbler so I don't think that there is anything strange about my sister and brother being designers as well as my dad. I think when you grow up with something, you are familiar with it and so tend to gravitate towards it. I remember my father giving me my first work bench when I was about six years old so I guess I was encouraged to think creatively. As well as that, my stepmother was very keen on cooking and wrote cook books and so I grew up with an innate knowledge of food and an understanding of cooking equipment."

Sebastian's family background is evident in his work and is particularly seen across the Universal Expert range which is specifically created to make light work of kitchen tasks. "Universal Expert is driven by functional innovation and it is about designing products that will work and function better," Sebastian explains. "I want someone to look at one of my products and think, 'Why has no one thought of that before?'. This is certainly true of Sebastian's collection with pieces such as the Chopping Station, with a drawer for chopped food and the Universal Expert by Sebastian Conran Toast Rack which accommodates all thicknesses of bread.

"I design the products so that they have an elegant simplicity to them rather than being fashion items," says Sebastian when we ask about the look and feel of the Universal Expert pieces. "They are really driven by how they work and the materials we use. We use traditional, natural materials where we can; I think that the materials we have chosen are designed to age gracefully and they look as good when they are new as they will do in 30 years' time. I look forward to finding our products in flea markets and antique shops in the future and I think that's the lovely thing about the materials that we use and because the forms are timeless."

Each of the Universal Expert pieces are clearly created to look beautiful in the kitchen and to bring stylish flair to everyday tasks, however it is undeniably function that is at the heart of each design. "All the products do their jobs in a special and innovative way," says Sebastian. "Everything is designed to be useful and I want all the products to be satisfying to use. I want people to feel affection for the products, I think that's an important thing. When I'm in the kitchen there are some things that I use more than others and I want my products to be the first thing people reach for. One of the first things people say about our work is how thoughtful it is and that's really what I want people to think when they use it."

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- 1 Bread Bin
- 2 Oil & Vinegar Set
- 3 Porcelain Mixing Bowls Set Of 3
- 4 Chopping Station
- 5 Stackable Mugs Set Of 4

When talking about his designs, Sebastian is clearly passionate about every piece. When we ask him which Universal Expert product is his favourite, he laughs and says,

"That's like asking if I have a favourite child! I like them all! I wouldn't say that I like some pieces more than others. I particularly like the Chopping Station and the Knife Block but I also love the Toast Rack and the Salt and Pepper Mill Set. I love the Oil and Vinegar Bottles too, if I didn't love them I wouldn't have designed them. These are products that I use in my home every day, I wouldn't say that I've designed them for myself but if they're not good enough for me then they're certainly not good enough for our customers and that's important."

