When designing a new kitchen, think about how you use the space. Take the entire family’s needs into consideration, not just the person preparing meals or doing clean-up. Since the kitchen is typically the hub of the home, it should be usable by everyone – even the smallest members of your family. Thankfully, kitchens don’t need to be large in size to be big on usability. You can maximize the current space with a little creativity and strategic planning. Make your kitchen feel larger without adding an addition.

“Open up your kitchen by eliminating walls that separate it from adjoining rooms, such as a living or dining room,” recommends Ken Connor of Connor Remodeling & Design, Inc.

To exercise true efficiency, your kitchen should contain plenty of storage options in varying styles and sizes.

Additionally, it should have ample counter space, an efficient layout with adequate room for more than one person to cook/work, be illuminated with abundant natural and artificial light, and filled with amenities that create an enjoyable space for meal preparation and family togetherness. You should make stuff easy to find. Figure out in advance where every item will be located, and you’ll never wonder again where you stuck the cheese grater or ice cream scoop.

An island or peninsula is a stylish focal point that serves as a multitasking work station, adding valuable counter space, additional seating, and storage options galore. Integrate a sink, butcher’s block, wine rack, fridge, or trash bin to further enhance your island’s functionality. Hanging pot racks add visual interest above an island while storing those frequently used items within easy reach.

With so many options for enhancing organization and space, it’s easy to incorporate interior accessories in your cabinetry to make finding what you need in the kitchen a cinch. Roll-out storage racks and trays, and organizers with independent operating shelves and adjustable dividers help you find cookware fast. Base pull-outs for spices and canned goods offer instant visibility and put these items at close range. Vertical tray dividers keep cookie sheets in line, while cutlery trays keep your silverware in order. Door mounted waste and recycling pullouts are quite popular too.

“Base cabinets become more functional when incorporating deep drawer storage and pullout shelves for effortless access to pots and pans, plastic-ware and other large, bulky items that are typically hard to store,” says Cheryl Faust of Faust Woodworking. “Choose drawers with full extension glides for total drawer availability.” Open and/or floating shelves in lieu of traditional upper cabinetry provide convenient access to plates and other items while adding a splash of color and character to your kitchen. Pull-down shelving systems bring hard to reach items to eye level, making access to objects in tall cabinets possible for someone of any size.

Cooking, studying, dining, socializing, snacking, and entertaining. Countless activities take place in the kitchen, making it the central gathering spot in your home and chief venue for your family to connect and communicate. But is this room you spend so much time in living up to your expectations? Is your kitchen really usable or is it a mish-mash of cupboards, utensils, appliances, and clutter that leaves you feeling frustrated and unproductive? If it’s the latter, keep reading.

Making Your Kitchen MORE USABLE

By Stacey Smart

Changing Spaces

Abode April 2010
If you’re planning to keep your same address well into retirement age, think and plan ahead in terms of kitchen features that will make your home efficient even as you grow older. Doing so can make your home more appealing to a wide range of people – a beneficial attribute if you decide to move earlier than intended. Determine how well the kitchen would function if the user were in a seated position. Accommodate wheelchairs by building multilevel work areas. Install more drawers at a lower height into your base cabinets, and incorporate easy-to-grip pulls on all cabinetry. Pull-down shelving is virtually a must for above counter cabinets, and open shelves make access to items even simpler. Raise up appliances to reduce bending, and allow ample space between an island and counter or wall. These techniques can increase kitchen comfort no matter the age or health status of its occupants.

Despite vigilant efforts to keep your counters and island free of clutter, they’re the inevitable holding spots for mail, homework, receipts and paperwork of all kinds. Having a devoted place for these items is practically a necessity for keeping today’s busy family organized. Your command center might include an under counter file cabinet, wall hanging organizer, or individual cubbies for temporarily storing a variety of materials; landing area for keys, phones and other personal items; and a charging station for small electronics such as cell phones, I-pods, etc. Keep track of messages and schedules on a chalkboard, cork board, or dry erase board.

The amount of gadgets available to today’s homeowner makes it easy to create a kitchen with gusto!


If you love to bake, consider adding a second oven. A warming drawer provides extra space to store prepared food prior to serving, while cooling drawers act as a second refrigerator and create extra room in your standing fridge. Designed with ergonomics in mind, drawer-style dishwashers make it painless to load and unload dishes, and pot fillers at the cook top are time savers that offer a safer way to prepare food.

Create more workspace by installing a pullout cutting board just below your countertop; mount a cookbook holder to the wall to keep recipes at eye level and out of your prep area; and add a backsplash accessory, such as a shelf over the range to keep everything needed for cooking close at hand. Above-range microwaves open up precious countertop space as well.

Hutches, armoires, and other freestanding pieces are a practical alternative for storing extra dishware, cutlery, and linens while adding elegant style to your kitchen or dining area. A pantry lets you buy in bulk and store food with ease in various shelving options like fixed, pullout, foldout, or rollout. Wall and under-cabinet racks are an easy way to organize mugs, glassware, pot lids, spices, and wine. And an appliance garage keeps small appliances like your mixer, coffeemaker, toaster, and blender out of sight when not in use.

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**UNIVERSAL KITCHEN DESIGN**

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