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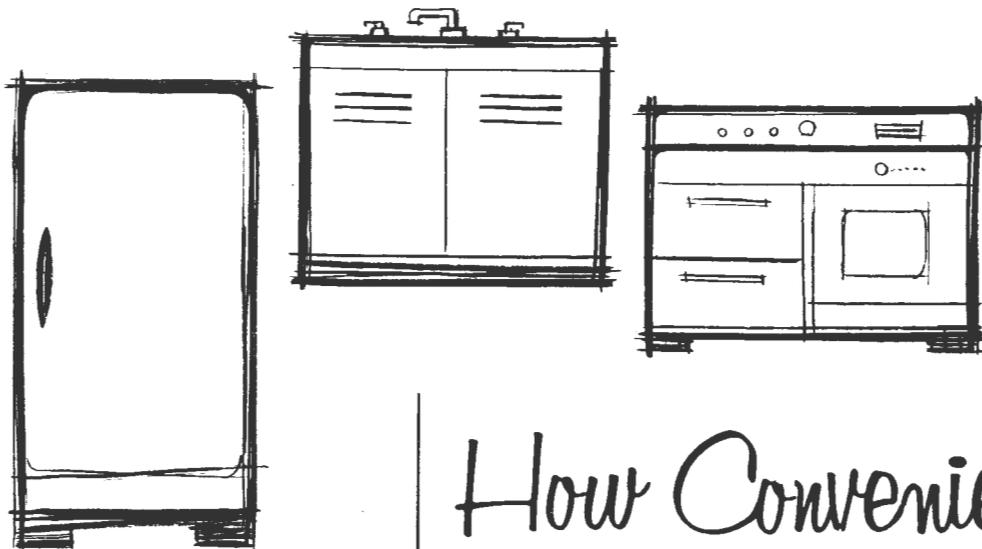
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## How Convenient Is Your Kitchen?

**Convenience and safety are important characteristics of a well-planned kitchen. A recent survey, however, shows that many Iowa farm kitchens are weak in these features. What about your kitchen? Is it Grade A?**

**by Julia Pond**

**R**EMEMBER the old saying, "You can't judge a book by its cover"? Likewise, you can't judge today's kitchens just by the modern equipment found there. The location of these appliances in relation to each other and in relation to the counter and storage space counts a lot toward the convenience, safety and appearance of every kitchen.

New developments and research have given us much information about kitchen equipment, cabinets, work heights and arrangements. This information gives us guides to use in planning new kitchens and in analyzing existing ones.

From a recent farm housing study in north-central and southern Iowa, we have information on the amount and location of counter space, amount of storage space and kitchen arrangement in many Iowa farm homes. Interviewers obtained information directly

from 227 homemakers. You may be interested in what we found out about these kitchens—about how well they measure up in some ways, how poorly in others.

While some of the kitchens examined had adequate storage cabinets and counter space, many were lacking in these respects. Often the counter wasn't located where it was needed most. On the good side, however, a high proportion of kitchens had adequate counter space for mixing and food preparation.

In some cases, the refrigerator was in another room, and there were some kitchens without a sink. In most of the kitchens, at least one of the three major pieces of equipment—sink, range and refrigerator—was separated from the other work centers. In many of the kitchens, we found three or more doors which resulted in main traffic lanes through the kitchen work areas.

To see how the kitchens differed, we worked out a system for scoring them. The points given

for a number of features were totaled to obtain scores by which each kitchen was classified as A, B or C. The kitchens having the highest scores were in group A; these had the most desirable features and the least undesirable features. Those with the lowest scores were in group C. If you were to visit these different kitchens, what would you probably find?

### **A-Score Kitchen . . .**

Few, if any, of the kitchens had all the desirable features without any undesirable ones. One of the A-score kitchens which has only two of the less-desirable features is illustrated in sketch 1. The door into the hall makes it necessary that the refrigerator stand by itself with no counter space beside it. Secondly, the location of this door means that the one traffic lane crosses the kitchen work area.

As for the good points, notice that the kitchen work centers are in one end of the room. Counter

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space is ample and well distributed—there's plenty on each side of both the sink and the range. There are no vacant spaces separating the cabinets from the range and the sink. Adequate base and wall cabinets provide storage where it's needed. And the un-

crowded eating area is located away from the kitchen work centers—though some traffic does cross it.

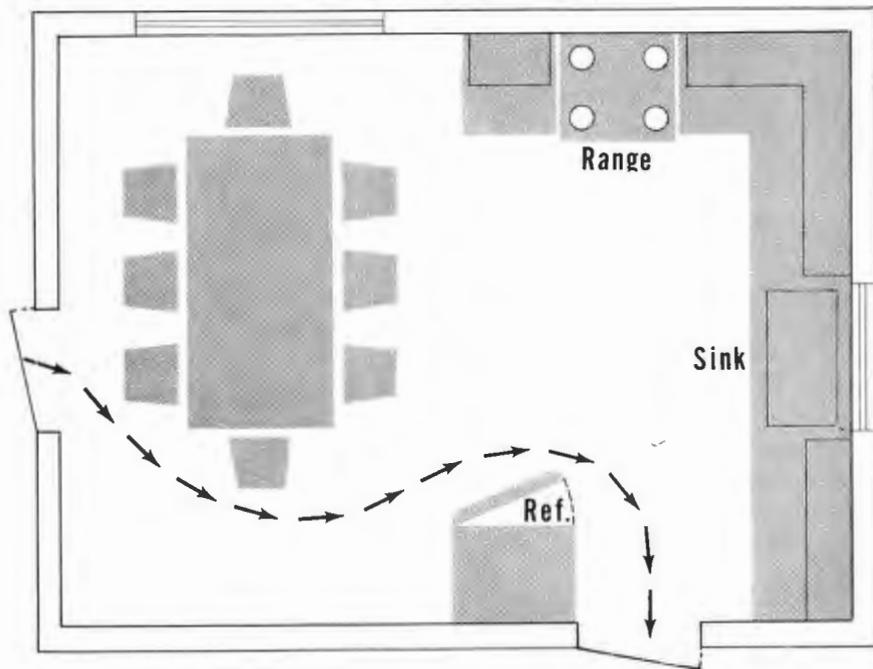
### B-Score Kitchen . . .

Our B-score kitchen (not

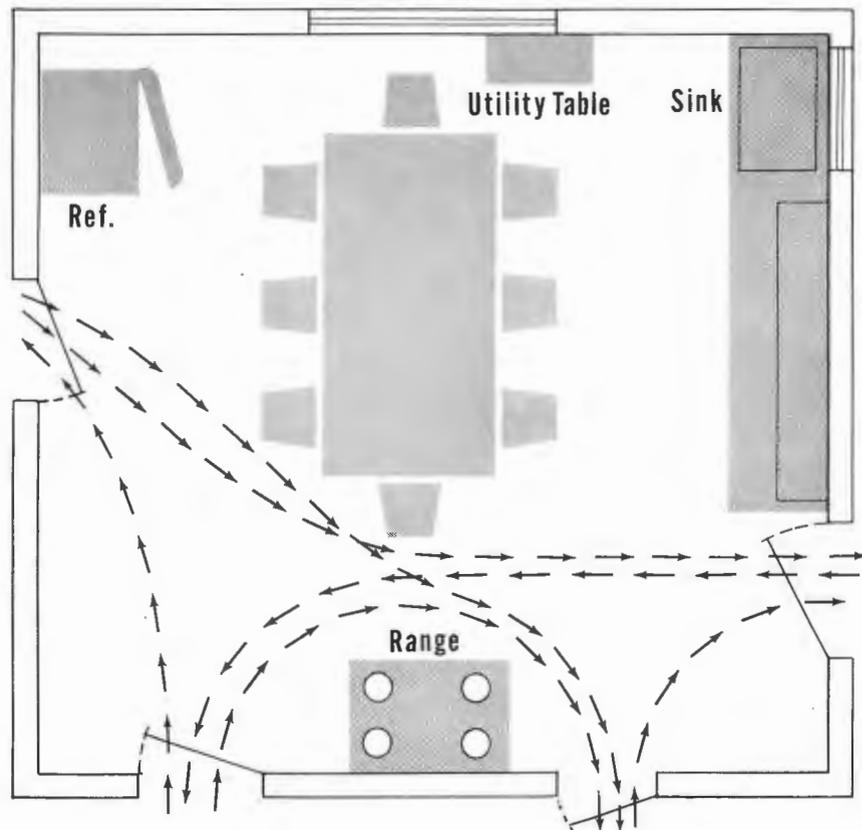
shown) is smaller than the A-score one we just described, but that isn't the greatest difference. The range, sink and cabinets are on one side of the room, while the refrigerator is across the room on the opposite side. There's no counter space beside it. The three doors are located so there's a main traffic lane through the kitchen work area.

At the left of the sink, there's more than enough counter space but a very small amount on the right. This same small stretch of counter is the only counter by the range—which means that serving space also is short. When we total the amounts of counter space and base and wall cabinets, we find that this kitchen doesn't have enough of any of them. The table where the family eats its meals is at one side of the room but very close to the range and cabinet.

### A-Score Kitchen



### C-Score Kitchen



### C-Score Kitchen . . .

In the C-score kitchen, shown in sketch 2, there's a sink, range and refrigerator—but each is located on a different side of the room. There's no counter space by the range, by the refrigerator or at the left of the sink. The only counter and storage spaces are at the right of the sink. The small utility table which stands midway between the sink and the refrigerator is used mainly for storage and cannot be easily moved to provide the needed counter space. This kitchen, like our B-score one, is lacking in total amounts of counter, base and wall cabinets.

The four doors mean that traffic lanes cross the work area. The kitchen eating area is in the center of the room, so the homemaker walks around the table many times a day. The main traffic lanes cross this part of the kitchen.

### Who Have "A" Kitchens?

Do kitchens vary much from one area of Iowa to another? Do farm-owner families have better kitchens than families who rent? Does the age of the homemaker make a difference—or does eco-

conomic status? Are the best kitchens found in houses which are in a good state of repair? To find answers to such questions as these, we grouped the families within the two sections of the state according to these characteristics and then noted the kitchen scores.

**Location:** Let's see first how our A-, B- and C-score kitchens were distributed in north-central Iowa and in southern Iowa. We found that, though these two sections of the state differed greatly as to the percentage of kitchens in groups A and C, they had the same percentage in group B. In the north-central area, the A group was the largest and the C group the smallest, while the reverse was true in the south.

We also found area differences within the north-central group and within the southern group. But with respect to certain features, the north-central and southern Iowa kitchens were quite similar.

**Tenure:** The owner houses of both north-central and southern Iowa had a higher proportion of A-score kitchens than did the renter houses. But both owner and renter houses of the south had more C-score kitchens than did those of the north. This indicates that the kitchens most in need of improvements are in the renter houses of north-central Iowa and in both the owner and renter houses of southern Iowa.

**Age of homemaker:** In the south, almost half of the homes of the middle-aged and young homemakers had C-score kitchens. In the north-central counties, age didn't seem to be related to the kitchen score, though more C-score kitchens were found in

the homes of the young and older homemakers than in those of homemakers 35 to 49 years of age.

**Economic status:** This was measured by a consumer-possessions score made up of the following items or features: six or more rooms, running water, kitchen sink with drain, completely equipped bath, septic tank, central heat, telephone, automatic water heater, automatic clothes dryer, home freezer, electric sewing machine, vacuum, and rug on the living room floor. The greater number of these features a house had, the higher the consumer-possessions score.

As might be expected, the houses having the high consumer-possessions scores were the houses having the best kitchens. Those with a medium or low consumer-possessions score had the medium- or low-score kitchens. This was true for both north-central and southern Iowa.

**Condition of the house:** The condition or state of repair of the house was associated with the type of kitchen but not to the degree that the consumer-possessions score was. In the south, more than 60 percent of the poor houses had poor kitchens. The medium and good houses of the south and the poor and medium houses of the north-central counties had a rather even distribution of A-, B- and C-score kitchens. A little less than 60 percent of the good houses in the north-central counties had A-score kitchens.

### Housing Values . . .

In addition to facts about the house itself, we also learned something of the families' attitudes,

goals and values as related to family housing. One bit of information related particularly to kitchens was that these Iowa farm homemakers considered *convenience* and *safety* among the most important characteristics of the entire house.

From a list of 10 housing values, these two were among the top three selected by all homemakers. The housing values considered were: convenience, safety, comfort, promotes health, location, promotes friendship activities, not expensive, promotes privacy, beauty and promotes personal interest.

### Family Eating Center . . .

In addition to the work centers, there's usually an eating area in the kitchen. Where does your family eat most of its meals? Are you like the four-fifths or more of Iowa farm families who eat some or all of their meals in the kitchen? A higher percentage of the A-score and B-score kitchens studied had an eating center than did the C-score kitchens. In a fourth of the houses in the north-central region and a third of those in the south, the eating center in the kitchen was the only one.

Over two-fifths of the families in both areas reported that they can seat seven or more persons at the kitchen table without crowding. One-fourth of these families, however, often need to seat more people. What about the eating area in your kitchen? Is it large enough?

Another feature frequently overlooked when planning the kitchen eating center is its location. Too often the dining table is in the kitchen work area or is located so main traffic lanes cross it. This was the case in 90 percent of the houses we studied. Even among three-fourths of the best kitchens where space wasn't a problem, more than four-fifths of the dining centers were poorly located — making them "just a place to eat."

Thus it seems that the eating centers of many Iowa farm houses could be improved. Is the dining center in your kitchen one of these? If so, when you do some-

**How Much Is "Too Little," "Enough" or "More Than Enough" Counter and Cabinet Space?"**

	"Too little"	"Enough"	"More than enough"
Counter at right of sink.....	less than 36"	36" to 47"	48" and over
Counter at left of sink.....	less than 36"	36" to 41"	42" and over
Counter beside isolated range.....	less than 18"	18" to 23"	24" and over
Counter beside isolated refrigerator.....	less than 12"	12" to 17"	18" and over
Total counter space.....	less than 9' 6"	9' 6" to 10' 5"	10' 6" and over
Total base cabinet space.....	less than 11' 6"	11' 6" to 13' 5"	13' 6" and over
Total wall cabinet space.....	less than 8' 0"	8' 0" to 9' 11"	10' 0" and over

\*These are the dimensions used in scoring the kitchens in the study, but not necessarily recommended for all farm kitchens.

## Score Your Own Kitchen!

The questions asked homemakers to obtain the information in this study are questions you might use in taking a look at your own kitchen. These questions and measurements are based on previous research and may give you ideas for improvements you can make.

1. Do you have more than three doors in your kitchen? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Are there traffic lanes through the kitchen work area? \_\_\_\_\_  
Imagine that a triangle connects your sink, refrigerator and range. If people cross this triangle when they come into the kitchen and go to other parts of the house, your answer is yes.
3. Are the refrigerator, range or sink separated from each other by such things as doors, low windows or empty wall and floor space? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Are the sink, range and refrigerator in your kitchen? \_\_\_\_\_

Note: When you answer questions 5 through 12 measure only the distance across the front of the counter or cabinet where there are or could be doors, drawers or knee-hole space.

5. Do you have 36 to 47 inches of counter space at the right of the sink? \_\_\_\_\_
6. Do you have 36 to 41 inches of counter space at the left of the sink? \_\_\_\_\_
7. Do you have 18 to 23 inches of counter space beside the range? \_\_\_\_\_

8. Do you have 12 to 17 inches of counter space beside the refrigerator? \_\_\_\_\_ Is this counter next to the door handle of the refrigerator? \_\_\_\_\_
9. Do you have an unbroken stretch of counter space of 36 inches or more for mixing and preparing foods? \_\_\_\_\_
10. Do you have a total of 9 feet 6 inches to 10 feet 5 inches of counter space in your kitchen? \_\_\_\_\_ You can include the table if it isn't the family dining table. Don't forget the wheel or utility table if you use one.
11. Do you have a total of 11 feet 6 inches to 13 feet 5 inches of base cabinets in your kitchen? \_\_\_\_\_ This is the cabinet below the counter or work surface.
12. Do you have a total of 8 feet to 9 feet 11 inches of wall cabinet in your kitchen? \_\_\_\_\_ This is the cabinet above the counter or work surface. Don't include the wall cabinets above the range or refrigerator. You may count as wall cabinet a floor-to-ceiling type of cabinet equipped with shelves.
13. If you have a family eating center in your kitchen, can you seat, without crowding, the number of people you usually need to seat? \_\_\_\_\_

If you answered "No" to the first three questions and "Yes" to the others, your kitchen probably is an A-score kitchen.

thing about it, make every effort to see that it will be attractive, large enough to meet your family needs and not a thoroughfare or part of the kitchen work area.

### Changes You Can Make . . .

If you're interested in improving your kitchen—in adding to its convenience and safety—you may be able to capitalize on some of the ideas brought out in this study. First of all, make a list of these improvements before you forget them. Next, discuss them with your family. Successful kitchen planning is always a family affair in which suggestions of each member are considered.

Kitchen improvements can usually be grouped into one of three types depending on the amount of money, labor and materials required. The first and possibly the easiest type of change to make is to relocate small supplies and equipment, storing them where they are first and most frequently used. This may mean some dup-

lication of items such as spoons, knives, seasonings, sugar and flour.

The second type of improvement can be made by adding or moving portable cabinets, tables or equipment. You may find it possible to move the refrigerator or even the range to a more convenient location. Don't hesitate to stand cabinets, refrigerator, range or table in front of an unnecessary door. Base cabinets or a table can be located in front of a low window. Often equipment or cabinets can be placed away from walls, thus forming an island or peninsula to improve work centers and eliminate undesirable traffic lanes.

The third type of improvement is the one in which extensive rearrangement or remodeling is done. This type is the most costly. It often means eliminating, adding or relocating doors and windows. In many cases new cabinets are installed. Some families may decide to move the kitchen to another room or, perhaps, to

add a new room for the kitchen.

If you are considering relocating cabinets or major pieces of equipment, remodeling your present kitchen or building a new one, detailed and accurately drawn plans are important. For instructions on how to draw these plans and the basic principles of kitchen planning, contact your county extension home economist, high school homemaking teacher or other trained persons.

Since family needs and interests vary, the above questions and measurements are general guides rather than specific standards—what might be enough or more than enough storage or counter space for some families may be too little for others. Some families may choose to give up other things to have a truly "Grade-A" kitchen. Others may prefer to sacrifice certain features in the kitchen to realize other goals they consider more essential.

Additional articles on kitchen planning will appear in future issues.