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Plan Management Into Kitchen Storage and Counter Space

Proper planning is the key to getting the greatest possible satisfaction from your kitchen. If you're thinking of remodeling or building a kitchen, now's the time to consider and plan for your family's needs.

by Mary Pickett

THE KITCHEN often is called the "heart of the home." Is yours? Do you and your family spend many hours in this area? If so, you'll want to get the most satisfaction possible from your investment in this important room—particularly if you're thinking of building or remodeling.

Proper planning is the key. Often the things that dissatisfy us about our kitchens are things that could have been avoided by developing a plan to meet the needs of our family. Things like inadequate counter and storage space, equipment located without regard to storage and counter spaces, and too great a distance between appliances are some of the common troublespots. Through planning many of these problems can be spotted and prevented so as to fit a kitchen for routine patterns of work.

Suppose you plan to build or remodel a kitchen, what can be done to get the best kitchen plan possible for you and your family? The answer: Follow a logical procedure in planning, keeping your family and its needs always in mind. Only you and your family know what your particular needs are—and deciding this may even be a challenging problem for you. Like any other problem, though, it can only be solved as you take the time to develop a plan step-by-step.

The storage space and work counter areas are important elements when you spend many hours in the kitchen. What do you know about your own special needs? In many homes, the number of items used in the kitchen increases almost daily. And storage space must be provided for these items.

Your own experience will be a valuable asset as you try to determine the basic space needs. Don't overlook the fact that valuable space in your present kitchen may be cluttered with items that haven't paid for their keep.

With experience as a starting point, you'll want to consider with the family how these basic space needs fit into the over-all family values and goals. As we seek to get the most from life, we're constantly considering the importance to our families of such factors as convenience, comfort, health, safety, beauty, friendship and economy. These factors also are important as you plan your kitchen so that your family may receive the greatest possible benefits. As an example, a homemaker who places a high premium on convenience will want to plan adequate, well-arranged storage space and counter areas. If this is true for you, consider how you can acquire this without sacrificing other things important to your family.

Remember to keep these decisions in line with the long-time goals that are important to your family.

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family. Just what really is important, and how will possible changes through the years alter these family goals? These decisions aren't easy to make. In the answer, however, is the secret to how effectively your family will be able to use and enjoy the kitchen.

What Resources?

After you've decided what you want to do, begin to take stock of the resources that may be used to obtain your goals. Of course you'll be investing money, but you'll also invest other valuable resources in this project. Many human resources of time, energy, interests, abilities, skills and attitudes will be used as you plan the storage and counter area for your kitchen and carry out the plan. Another resource which may be tapped, and which should be quite useful, is information available in the community. You'll find that there are many sources of information to guide you in planning the storage space and counter area in your kitchen—such as publications made available by the Extension Service, colleges and universities. Information from general magazines, appliance dealers, lumber yards, etc., can be helpful, too.

Your family may have varying amounts of particular resources at its disposal. A limitation of any one of these, money for example, may greatly influence your decisions about buying storage and counter facilities. For example, if the money available for such a purpose is limited, you may choose to acquire individual storage units as you can afford them over a period of time—or you may choose to buy less expensive units which have special features. Regardless of the desires of the family, such a limitation will naturally influence the kinds of choices you make.

Budgeting Resources . . .

As your family gains a more complete understanding of its resources, the next question is, "How much of each of these resources should be spent for storage and counter facilities in the new kitchen?" Guides which may help you are based on principles drawn from economics. Such guides point out that there are different ways to solve any problem and will help you understand what the results will be should you choose one or another of these ways.

- When considering the storage space and counter area in the kitchen, one guiding question that may be asked is, "How much storage and counter space do you need?" At what point would the amount be too much in terms of the activities, the space to be cared for and the investment required for these units? Too much storage or counter space may actually result in inefficiency by increasing the distance you travel in doing your work and by encouraging the accumulation of clutter. An application of this guide disproves the saying, "If a little is good, more is better."

- Another question which may guide your decision is related to the total spending of your family. Each time you use resources for one item of consumption, an equal amount must be subtracted from another item or use. The question is, "Which use will bring you the greatest satisfaction relative to the costs involved?" For example, if you spend a certain amount of money for storage space and counter area in the kitchen, you won't have this amount to spend on some other item of family living. So, to be realistic, you'll want to consider all the phases of your living when you start planning for a new or remodeled kitchen.

Consider whether the expenditure for this space will bring you the greatest satisfaction at this time and in the future. Such an approach to your problem may be worth its weight in gold in terms of the satisfactions you'll eventually receive from your final decision. Many mistakes can often be prevented at this stage in the planning.

- A third question is, "What items of family living can be purchased with the available resources of your family?" For example, what can the family buy when its total sum of money is a specific amount—such as $500? Which combinations of items of family living may be obtained with this amount and be equally satisfying to the family? This isn't a simple problem for most families. Usually the money available is limited, and there are many items competing for the family dollars. At this point your family should definitely decide just how much they will spend for each item of family living.

The answers to these questions will help you get the most from the resources you decide to invest in kitchen storage and counter area. And answers will also guide you when you move on to the next stage of planning for the space needs.

Blueprint for Action . . .

Just as an architect's blueprint is worked out in careful detail to show the finished structure, so should your plan for your finished kitchen be carefully worked out. The following steps will help you plan surely and accurately.

1. Draw your floor plan. If you're remodeling, use the measurements of your present kitchen or any space that can be gained in remodeling. If you're planning to build, draw your plan from the architect's or builder's blueprint. A scale of ½ inch to the foot makes a convenient working drawing. With large equipment sketched in, you can see the space that will be available for other uses.

2. List the family activities carried out in the kitchen, then rearrange your list in order of importance. The frequency of any activity is a major factor in de-
It's estimated that the kitchen averages about one-fourth of the total cost of a house. If so, it's wise to make the most efficient use of resources in planning the kitchen. The following recommendations have been proposed, as the result of extensive research, to help you make the best use of your money, time and energy plus having the satisfactions which go with having adequate work, counter and storage space. Letters correspond to those on the sketches.

### Counter:
- \(a\) — 2 feet of counter for serving next to range
- \(b\) — 3 to 3\(\frac{1}{2}\) feet of counter to the left of the sink
- \(c\) — 3 to 4 feet of counter to the right of the sink
- \(d\) — 3 to 4 feet of counter for mixing

### Storage:
- 9 linear feet of wall storage frontage
- 12 to 13\(\frac{1}{2}\) feet of base cabinet frontage

The distances from the center of one appliance to the center of another can guide you in their location so that the distances aren't too great for travel.

- \(x\) — distance from center front of range to center front of sink, 4-6 feet
- \(y\) — distance from center front of sink to center front of refrigerator, 4-7 feet
- \(z\) — distance from center front of refrigerator to center front of range, 4-9 feet
terminating its importance. Since feeding the family is the primary function performed in a kitchen, food preparation activities are high on almost anyone's list.

3. Check each activity on your list that requires storage or counter space. Label with an s each activity that require storage space, and use a c for counter space.

4. Define your own meal patterns—this means, figure out the types of meals you serve your family. Generally these are quite uniform within a family. Keeping a record of menus (including snacks and party foods) for a week or two will enable you to see your pattern.

5. From the same menus, list types of foods frequently, less frequently and seldom prepared.

6. List the processes involved—paring, stirring, rolling, chopping, etc. And note the frequency of the different processes.

7. List the tools and equipment you use (or expect to acquire) to perform the food preparation activities. Indicate sizes and numbers where pertinent.

8. Now list the food supplies you must store in the kitchen cupboards. While you're working with this list, star the foods you usually buy in a prepared or semi-prepared form. These require little counter space for preparation.

9. Now you're ready to consider the storage space needed. Here are some guides that will help you in deciding the best location and placement for each item in your kitchen.

   —Store together the items that are used together—staple groceries, mixing tools and measuring cups by the mixing counter; fry pans, meat forks and hot pads by the range.

   —Keep all parts of any piece of equipment together—those of the food chopper, for example.

   —Stack or nest only articles that are alike (so you’ll always be taking the ones from the top) or those generally used at the same time, such as serving dishes, or items used infrequently, like turkey platters.

   —Store packages in single rows with the narrow edges toward the front. Put duplicates or rarely used supplies behind. Give priority for the easy-to-reach space to things that are small, frequently used, heavy or hard to grasp.

10. If you're interested in doing efficient, though detailed, planning of your storage space, cut wrapping paper in strips as wide as the inside depth of the cupboards you will likely use. Then lay out your items to be stored and move them around until you find an arrangement that suits you. Here are some minimum dimensions you may want to follow:

   —Rigid or fragile articles, such as dishes, need ½ inch more than their widest dimension. The widest article to be stored on a shelf determines the minimum shelf depth.

   —To grasp heavy, rigid articles that must be lifted with two hands, you’ll need an extra inch in side-to-side dimensions to give room for your fingers. Non-rigid packaged supplies can be placed closer together; ¼ inch extra shelf depth is sufficient, as is ¼ inch between items.

   —Place items that are to be stored in drawers far enough apart to be picked up easily. Depth of drawers can be ½ inch greater than the bulkiest items if the contents are so restrained that they don’t shift and pile up as the drawer is moved.

   —The width of the largest item to be stored in a cupboard determines the minimum door-opening required. Height between shelves is determined by the tallest item to be stored there, plus 1 inch for clearance. If items must be tipped in handling, more height is needed. In the case of a stack of dishes, for instance, the height needs to be the height of the stack plus the height of one item plus 1 inch. If one or two tall items on a shelf make it necessary to place other shelves higher and harder to reach, look for an alternate location for the tall things. Adjustable shelves can provide for this kind of flexibility.

   —Vertical slots (for example, for baking pans) can be ½ to 1 inch wider than the contents if there are cut-outs to enable you to grasp the contents. If you must reach in, 2½ to 3 inches are needed.

   —Drawer partitions for bulk foods should come to within ½ inch of the drawer top. For miscellaneous items, the dividers need be only high enough to hold the items in position. Utensils stored vertically in a drawer usually need dividers about 6 inches tall.

   —Adequate space for hanging utensils should allow 1½ inches greater length than the long dimension of the utensil. A clearance behind a hung utensil such as a saucepan should be about 4 inches so that it may hang freely and be grasped easily.

Further recommendations which may help you in planning the total amount of storage and counter space for your kitchen have been based upon research which was done in the College of Home Economics at Iowa State. These measurements were felt to be adequate, on the average, for the preparation of meals for a family of four—husband, wife, a 5-year-old and a teenage boy. The menus used were of such a nature as to provide a rigid test of space needed for such preparations.

1. Base cabinet frontage—12 feet to 13 feet 6 inches.

2. Wall cabinet frontage—9 feet.

3. Counter at left of sink—3 feet to 3 feet 6 inches.

4. Counter at right of sink—3 to 4 feet.

5. Counter to either side of range or next to built-in oven—2 feet.

6. Counter for mixing—3 to 4 feet.