Planning the kitchen

Marie Budolfson
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Budolfson: Planning the kitchen

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Planning the Kitchen

By Marie Budolfson

Convenient, attractive kitchens have not always been considered essential. But actually the old fashioned kitchen with no sink, few storage places, improper working heights and many doors is as out of date as the horse and buggy.

At best, some kitchen work is monotonous and time-consuming. Because many homemakers spend more time in the kitchen than in any other room, it should be the most carefully planned room in the house. Provisions must be made for getting work done with the least use of time and energy and yet with the greatest amount of pleasure.

Before planning a kitchen, each family will want to determine just what activities are to be carried on there. If some or all of the meals are to be eaten in the kitchen, if laundry work or food preservation is to be done there, the kitchen should be so planned.

Fig. 1. Storage space is convenient near the range, as is a small serving table near the dining room. Note the exhaust fan in the hood above the range to carry off steam and odors.
WAYS TO IMPROVE KITCHENS

Generally either one or a combination of the following improvements may be made in the kitchen:

1. Rearrangement of equipment on hand may provide convenient centers for preparing meals easily with a minimum of steps, energy and time. Such changes shorten distances from the work table to the stove or from the dishwashing center to the dish cupboard. Changes in storage arrangement often reduce stooping, lifting and bending. This type of rearrangement is most important when one cannot buy new equipment or large amounts of building materials.

2. Addition of new equipment that is well chosen to fit the family’s needs and to supplement other equipment will improve many kitchens.

3. Structural changes involving rebuilding of the room permit the greatest amount of improvement in a kitchen. Such changes, however, cost money and need careful advance planning. They should not be planned without assurance from a competent person that they are structurally possible.

CONVENIENCE IN KITCHENS

There has been a trend toward small kitchens with a separate utility or workroom on the first floor or in the basement. With this plan, the size of the kitchen may be as small as 9’x11’ or 13’. If eating, laundering or canning must be done in the kitchen, or a coal range is used, the size should be increased. The kitchen should be large enough to accommodate the number who normally work there without inconveniencing meal preparation.

If the kitchen has a minimum of doors, preferably two and not more than three, conveniently spaced near the corners of the room, traffic through the kitchen will be reduced. Such a plan also will provide better wall space for arrangement of equipment.

Two outside walls are desirable for good lighting and cross ventilation. If this is impossible, the upper part of the porch door may have glass to admit light. Other doors and windows may be located to give cross ventilation. In either case an automatic electric ventilating fan will carry off steam, smoke and odors.

(See fig. 1.)
Every kitchen will need a central lighting fixture hung close to the ceiling to provide an even, artificial light throughout the room. Shadows can be avoided by installing additional fixtures over the sink and work tables. To control glare, all bulbs should be shielded by suitable globes, translucent reflectors or shades.

The whole kitchen should be easy to clean. Floors are best finished to wear long and to resist moisture. Linoleum is good and probably the most popular. For the walls, washable painted plaster, synthetic tile, wallboard or heavy washable wallpaper is satisfactory.

**TYPES OF ARRANGEMENT**

Most kitchen arrangements, either old or new, fit one of three plans: the U-shape, the L-shape or the corridor-shape. The shape will depend on the general house plan determining the location of doors, windows and the chimney. And it also depends on the size of the kitchen and the activities to be carried on there. In some cases modifying or combining basic plans might be necessary.

Any of these plans permit continuous and convenient work areas. Unless the worker is left-handed, work areas are best arranged so work proceeds from right to left. Thus, at the extreme right might be the refrigerator, followed by cabinets and counter space, the sink, then more cabinets and counter space. Last in order and near the dining area would be the range and fuel box if one is needed.

In the U-shape or L-shape kitchen this arrangement works out easily. In the corridor kitchen, the refrigerator and range with a counter between them may have to be on one side of the room and cabinets and sink on the other. If the chimney is located so the range is at the extreme right of the working area, the refrigerator would be at the left. This causes the worker to proceed from left to right which is less convenient for most people. (See fig. 5.)

In a new house, the kitchen may be any type desired provided it is so planned at the start. When remodeling, the shape and arrangement of the room is likely to be determined by the present house plan and construction.

In the suggested plans (see figs. 2, 3, 4) all work proceeds
Fig. 2. The U plan is a favorite because equipment can be arranged compactly in an almost continuous working surface around three walls.

U-Shaped Kitchen

Fig. 3. The L plan allows kitchen equipment to be placed on two adjoining walls. This leaves the other walls free for a dining table, desk or other equipment.

L-Shaped Kitchen

Fig. 4. The two-wall plan with equipment on two parallel walls would be most usable for small kitchens or those having only one outside wall.

Two-wall Kitchen
from right to left. The refrigerator near the rear entrance is convenient for storing foods or for ice delivery.

A range near the dining room door is convenient for serving cooked foods. If a fuel box is used, the top might be covered with linoleum and used as a serving table at the left of the range. Otherwise, a small table or a cabinet might be placed there.

**REMODELING AN OLD KITCHEN**

Limitations on the plan are sure to crop up when an old kitchen is remodeled. Even though an ideal arrangement is impossible, convenience is so important that anyone is justified in spending time to plan the very best arrangement.

When remodeling an old kitchen these are first problems to consider: The general house plan, such as relation of the kitchen to dining room, rear entrance, workroom and basement; the lo-

Fig. 5. A kitchen arranged from left to right is convenient for a left-handed person.
cation of the chimney, doors and windows; and the size of the
room.

It is sometimes possible to use to better advantage a room other
than the one that has been used for the kitchen. In making such
a change, the dining room should be next to the kitchen. Most
people also want the kitchen windows to overlook the entrance
drive and farm buildings. If the range requires a chimney, the
room selected for the kitchen must have one.

Some of the large, old kitchens need to be rearranged to bring
the working units closer together. An attractive way to shorten
such kitchens is to build a half-wall 3 to 5 feet high and 6 to 12
inches deep. The space cut off by the wall can be used as a din­
ing nook, playroom, laundry or workroom. Shelves, drawers or
cupboards may be built into the deeper half-wall to provide con­
venient storage space. (See fig. 6.)

Whatever room is to be used for the kitchen, first considera­
tions are the doors and windows. If there are more than two
doors, one of them might be blocked out. Doors grouped at one
end or one corner of the room are best. If they must be at op­
posite corners or midway on opposite walls, adequate storage
cabinets and counter space are still possible.

KITCHEN CENTERS

In many kitchens, work-saving
habits are hampered by in­
efficiently arranged equipment.
Careful planning and grouping
of the equipment, utensils and
supplies commonly used together
will develop work centers. Then
the homemaker can do her work
step by step without wasting mo­
tions. (See fig. 7.)

Fig. 6. A half wall shortens
a long kitchen and provides ex­
tra storage space.
These so-called centers divide into four types: (1) planning, (2) preparation and storage, (3) cooking and serving and (4) dishwashing or clean-up. Here is a suggested guide for arranging kitchen centers:

**PLANNING CENTER AT A DESK**
- Memo pads
- Writing supplies
- Account book
- Menus and recipes
- Receipts
- Equipment guide books

**DISHWASHING CENTER AT THE SINK**
- All Utensils and Supplies Needed for Dishwashing
  - Dish pans
  - Dish drainer
  - Plate scraper
  - Paper towels
  - Garbage container
  - Kitchen towels
  - Dish towels
  - Wastepaper basket
  - Soap
  - Scouring powder
  - Silver polish
  - Sink strainer
  - Sieve
  - Dish cloths
  - Sauce pans, if water is added first
  - Coffee maker

**COOKING AND SERVING CENTER—NEAR THE RANGE**
- Frying pans, roasters
- Saucel pans
- Flour and seasonings used at the stove
- Pan covers
- Double boiler
- Fork, turners and stirring spoons
- Cooking thermometers
- Teapot
- Tea and coffee
- Cereals

**PREPARATION CENTER—REFRIGERATOR AND STORAGE CUPBOARD**
- Measuring spoons and cups
- Mixing spoons
- Molding board
- Egg beater
- Rolling pin
- Food chopper
- Flour sifter
- Grater
- Pastry blender
- Cutters
- Bowls
- Baking pans
- Knives, spatula
- Casseroles
- Flour, spices, extracts, sugar, cereals, soda, baking powder
- Can opener
- Recipes
Fig. 7. A planning center located in a corner of this dining area is handy to the telephone, back door and kitchen.

It is much easier to keep a kitchen in order if utensils and supplies are kept near the place they are used most frequently. This may mean having more than one set of measuring cups, paring knives, spoons and other pieces of small equipment at different locations.

PLANNED CABINETS

Kitchen cabinets require as much planning as any other part of the house. Each unit should be planned for the work to be done near by and the equipment and supplies to be used.

The first step in planning cabinets is an inventory of all the equipment to be stored in the kitchen. It should include all large-quantity cooking utensils, cleaning supplies, table leaves, pressure canner or other articles apt to be stored in out-of-way places in the house.

The next decision is whether the cabinets will be built by a carpenter or be ready-made units. If they are built by a car-
penter every detail can be done to suit family needs. But there are a variety of ready-made cabinet units, and the workmanship may be better than can be done locally. However, individuals may have difficulty in finding cabinets of the right height or arrangement.

The best way to plan an ideal kitchen cabinet arrangement is to sketch the shelves and drawers while thinking through the tasks to be done and equipment to be used. This sketch could be used by the carpenter. Or it will help in selecting ready-made units.

Cabinet bases should have toe space at least 4 inches deep and 3 inches high. Cabinets built to the ceiling will collect less clutter and dust and will look better. Articles seldom used may be stored on top shelves.

The top of the cabinet base used as work counter should be no wider than 24 inches; if wider, it is hard to reach to the back either for cleaning or working. This top may be covered with inlaid linoleum, metal or tile. Hardwood, 1\(\frac{1}{2}\) inches thick, could be used if it is kept well oiled. Smooth linoleum is most popular as it is economical, serviceable and easily cared for. Any of these materials can be carried up the wall at the back of the counter to form a splash board. Wood cove makes a rounded corner and prevents cracking of linoleum. Metal or plastic strips can be used to finish the edge. These should be of a material which will not rub off on clothing.

Handles for drawers and cupboards need not be in the center of the space but may be placed where most convenient to reach. Hardware should be selected on the basis of quality—to give better and longer service.

WORKING HEIGHTS

Correct working heights are important, but it is impossible to recommend heights to suit every individual. The homemaker should work these out for herself. A good way is to stand with the arms slightly flexed and palms of the hands extended as if resting on a table. The distance from the floor to the hands will be the average working height when standing. Unless a person is unusually tall or short this distance will be 32 to 36
Fig. 8. Women need a place to work comfortably. This solution—a lapboard that pulls out from the cupboard like a breadboard.

inches. Most manufacturers' equipment—ranges, counter tops, base cabinets—is 36 inches high.

One feature to include in every kitchen is a lap table low enough to allow the worker to sit as she works. It might be a drop leaf, a low table or a board which pulls out like a breadboard. The height should be about 25 to 30 inches, or slightly lower than one's average working height. (See fig. 8.) Many homemakers like another board on which to fasten a food chopper. This may be planned as any pull-out board, but must be built of heavy hardwood, securely installed so it will not give as it is used.

**PREPARATION UNITS**

Cupboards used to be planned with all the shelves the same distance apart regardless of size and shape of articles to be stored. In such cases there was much waste space, yet not enough space for tall pitchers, percolators and vases. At that time, too, a cupboard often was used solely for one type of storage. That made
a separate cupboard for staples, for pans or dishes. So the homemaker took many wearisome steps to assemble the supplies and utensils she wished to use from each cupboard.

Today homemakers put in each cupboard the staples and utensils used together. For instance, the coffee could be stored with the measuring utensil and coffee pot near the sink or other water supply. With such carefully planned preparation units, the homemaker can stand in one spot while she assembles the necessary supplies and utensils and use them to prepare food. (See fig. 9.)

A unit for preparing baked goods is convenient near the refrigerator and at the right of the sink. However, the arrangement within the unit is probably more important than the location of the unit itself.

One section of it should be devoted to the mixing of foods. In this space should go flour, sugar, spices and extracts plus the mixing bowls, measuring cups and other utensils used for mixing.

The larger baking pans could be stored in the deeper cupboards below the work surface.

A section of this space with horizontal or vertical removable partitions is convenient for storing trays, baking sheets, muffin tins or platters. (See fig. 10.) Sometimes the front of the middle shelves is hollowed out slight-
ly so it is easier to reach articles on the lower shelves. Sliding shelves used in the lower cabinets may be pulled out and equipment reached easily. When a sliding shelf is used, a narrow strip of thin wood should extend above the rear edge of the shelf to prevent dishes from sliding off. (See fig. 11.)

The lower part of the cabinet should have shallow drawers with divisions for mixing spoons, forks and spatulas. For making deep drawers more practical see fig. 12. In addition, there should be one or more pull-out mixing boards and large drawers or bins for storing quantities of flour and sugar. Other space is needed to store pans.

Adjustable shelves are handy in cupboards above the working area. They may be placed close together for short equipment such as baking cups and molds, or farther apart for tall articles. Some shelves need not extend the full length of the cupboard, leaving space at the end for tall equipment. A shelf depth of 12 inches will provide storage for ordinary supplies and utensils.
At least 16 inches should be allowed between the overhead cupboards and work counter to provide comfortable working space. The section where spices and extracts are stored may have some U-shape shelves. Then as containers are placed around the U, no article is behind another.

One part may have narrower shelves or a stair-step arrangement on the wider shelves for storing small articles to avoid having them behind one another.

Spice shelves may be attached inside the cupboard doors. Or knives or measuring spoons and cups may be hung on the door.

SINK UNITS

The sink is most convenient if located on a wall rather than in a corner. Then it can be reached easily from all parts of the kitchen.

Fig. 11. Sliding shelves permit full use of storage space and bring utensils within easy reach.
If a flat-rim sink is installed, the bottom of the sink will be lower than the working area. Some women prefer to plan part of their work tops higher than the mixing unit, placing the sink in this higher part. This brings the bottom of the sink a few inches higher which may be more convenient.

The flat-rim single or double sink or a cabinet sink may be used. If the flat-rim sink is used, the drain boards are usually the regular work top of the cabinets. If a cabinet sink is used, there may be one or two drain boards. A mixing faucet combining hot and cold water is most convenient in any sink.

The space beneath the sink may be used for soaps, cleansers, garbage pail, dish pan or small supplies of fresh foods. Narrow racks inside the door near the top might hold soap and cleansers. The door of the sink cabinet should have perforations for ventilation. If the sink is not enclosed in a cabinet, a sliding rack for tea towels may be built beneath the sink.

Fig. 12. Sliding inside trays and slotted partitions may be added to deep drawers.
A special section should be planned for storing the china and silver at the left of the sink if possible. Then as dishes are washed, they may be passed from right to left. If this unit cannot be at the left of the sink, the clean dishes could be stacked on trays or a tea cart to be taken to the china cupboard.

China shelves should be close together, since tall stacks of dishes are inconvenient and likely to break. In planning a new china cupboard, adjustable shelves will permit maximum storage. Some of them might be half width. Here again all shelves need not extend the length of the cupboard; the space should be planned to fit the dishes. (See fig. 13.)

In modernizing an old kitchen where it is impossible to have all shelves adjustable, some half-width shelves may be added or a movable stair-step section may give additional space.

The lower part of the china storage unit might have drawers for silver and towels, a porcelain- or metal-lined drawer for bread and cake and extra space for miscellaneous articles such as repair tools or paper and cord. If this unit is close enough to the
dishwashing center, a drop door space might be provided for dish pan and drainer.

**COOKING UTENSILS**

A cupboard where cooking pans can be hung should be easily reached from both the range and the sink. It may be separate or a section of another cabinet. Heavy roasters may be stored in the lower part of this unit. Cooking forks and spoons can be placed in a shallow, partitioned drawer. Divided drawers or shelves provide convenient storage space for casseroles and lids and help prevent damage to small equipment.

Vertical sliding drawers are good for storing stew pans and other utensils which ordinarily are hung. Swivel casters at the front and back help drawers slide more easily.

**CLEANING CLOSETS**

A well-planned cleaning closet aids in orderly and easy housekeeping. It might be located in a back hall, in the kitchen or in the general utility room. Often a waste space in a hall can be converted into a cleaning closet easily accessible from all parts of the house. (See fig. 14.) If none of these arrangements is possible, the cleaning closet should be included in the plans for remodeling the kitchen.

*Fig. 14. A cleaning closet is fitted into unused space in a hallway between an entrance hall and kitchen.*
A good cleaning closet provides space for all articles used in cleaning: pails, brooms, brushes, mops, vacuum cleaners, dusters, cleaning agents and repair kit. And it might provide space for lamps, table leaves, bathroom supplies and step ladder.

The dimensions and interior arrangement depend upon the articles to be stored and the best method for storing them. They should be arranged so one can be removed without disturbing another.

SOME SUGGESTED MEASUREMENTS FOR KITCHEN IMPROVEMENT*

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<tr>
<td>Lap table</td>
<td>25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sink floor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sink drainboard (when used for dishwashing)</td>
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<td>Shelves frequently used</td>
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<td>Depth of cupboards above sink (inside measurement)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Depth of toe space</td>
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<td>Minimum space between vertical partitions</td>
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