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Streamline The Kitchen

By JEAN VIETH KLAS

With an eye to postwar remodeling, the average Mrs. Homemaker casts the other eye upon her kitchen as the first room for improvements.

First and foremost, she’ll plan for efficiency—getting the job done in the least amount of time with the least amount of energy—that’s good home management. Which means that such equipment as the range and refrigerator must be placed before the accessories can follow.

Her major kitchen activities—food preparation, cooking, serving and clearing up—center around the refrigerator, range and sink. This equipment should be placed so the preparation of food can flow along in a simple direct route from the time it enters the kitchen until it is served at the table.

Lessen “Stepping”

Some of the roomy farm kitchens that keep Mrs. Homemaker “stepping” need to be rearranged to put the working units closer together. A really attractive way to shorten such a kitchen is by building a half-wall, about 3 or 4 feet high and 6 to 12 inches deep, extending from one wall perhaps 4 or 5 feet into the room. With this arrangement, she can group her equipment into a U-shape, which is considered a most efficient type of arrangement. The space cut off by the wall she could use as a breakfast nook. The top of the half-wall might be used for “counter service.” Or perhaps the children might use the space on the other side of the half-wall for their playroom where Mrs. Homemaker can keep an eye on their activities. Shelves or cupboards could be built in the half-wall for their playthings. Another use would be as a sewing room or even a laundry room. Two short walls on either side of the room can make the same arrangement leaving a “gate” opening from kitchen to dinette.

Before these shortening devices can be used, however, the structural room plan must be taken into consideration. Five doors and three windows in the kitchen certainly allow no wall space for convenient working areas. Are all the doors necessary? Couldn’t one or two be blocked out and the family traffic rerouted? Too often the kitchen serves as a hallway from the back door to the rest of the house. If the kitchen is too large anyway, perhaps part of it could be walled off for a rear hallway, thus avoiding pre-dinner confusion in the kitchen when the family answers the mealtime calls.

Sewing, Laundering Too

Kitchens, to be most pleasant and well lighted, should have two outside walls. Now, if Mrs. Homemaker’s pantry should be on one of the outside walls, it may be stealing the possible light. If the storage space isn’t needed, why not take the old fashioned pantry out? On the other hand, if the pantry is not obstructing light or other conveniences of the kitchen, it could be turned into a storage space for the washing machine and other laundry equipment. Or the sewing machine and its accessories could be kept there. Tiny pantries sometimes can be taken over as the cleaning closet for mop and broom, sweeper and dust cloth. With plumbing, the pantry could become a washroom, handy for the men in for dinner.

The idea of laundering in the light of day rather than underground, basement style, is being stressed today. In fact, most of the former basement duties are coming up with the rest of the family work. The milk separator, the men’s washroom and a place for their work wraps and boots, a household tool chest—these could all be brought up from below. It would save time and many steps for Mrs. Homemaker if she had a utility room near the kitchen on the ground floor specially designed for these basement duties. And this may be an idea for remodeling the spacious kitchen—cut it into two separate rooms.

Then again, the room Mrs. Homemaker is using for a kitchen today may not be the most convenient room to use. If she would study the entire house plan, perhaps she would find that a down...
stairs bedroom would be more convenient, or maybe the dining room, depending, of course, on the necessary plumbing and structural changes.

In placing her equipment, Mrs. Homemaker should keep in mind a few simple rules—one is that all work should proceed from right to left. So the refrigerator being the first stopover for food should be close to the back entry. To the left of the refrigerator should be the preparation center, the sink and work space. Then again, to the left, the stove. Since cooking is the last step before serving, the range should be close to the dining room door with a service table handy. A fuel box covered with linoleum could be used as a utility table.

Four Storage Units

If Mrs. Homemaker takes tally of the part her cabinet plays in the kitchen, she'll find it usually can be divided into four units: one for mixing, one for china storage, one for storing cooking utensils and the storage space in connection with the sink.

The mixing unit is devoted to the preparation of foods. Here sugar and spice, flour and extracts are stored. And by their side, the mixing bowls, measuring spoons, measuring cups, rolling pin and whatever else it takes to mix up a cake, pie or bread. Here Mrs. Homemaker can plan the storage spaces to fit her equipment. She can use adjustable shelves that may be placed close together for the baking cups and moulds or farther apart for tall articles. Some of the shelves needn't extend the full length of the cupboards, leaving space at the end for tall pitchers, jars and bottles. Too, in the mixing unit, she might plan for a lap board which pulls out of the cupboard in the same manner as the bread board, only at a height to allow Mrs. Homemaker to sit as she uses it.

The short spice cans seem to cause her the most “searching” problems. To avoid this, she could build stair-stepped shelves in her cupboard then allow only one row of spice cans per step. Then each one would be visible at a glance. Or spice racks on the inside of doors would be another solution. Shallow cupboards, about 6 inches deep, are handy for spice storage.

Sliding shelves used in the lower part of the cabinets would put her equipment within easy reach. She should also plan a section with horizontal or vertical, removable partitions for storing trays, baking sheets, muffin tins or platters.

As for the china storage unit, she should place it at the left of the sink, if possible, so as the dishes are dried they may be passed from right to left. Tall stacks of dishes are likely to cause breakage—shelves should be close together. Here again, shelves built only one half the length of the cupboards may serve the purpose of leaving room for tall pitchers or glasses. Adjustable shelves would be best.

Mrs. Homemaker’s cooking utensils should be stored where they’re easily accessible to both the range and the sink. She can plan for vertical sliding drawers in one part of the cabinet section where stew pans and skillets could be hung, thus eliminating the stacking system.

She can utilize the space below the sink, too. Soap, cleansers, dishpans and the garbage pail could be kept there. Tea towels, too, could disappear under the sink or on a sliding towel rack or a sink drawer with a false bottom of towel rods. She should have perforations in the door of the sink cabinet to allow ventilation.

Specialties

Now that Mrs. Homemaker has a good start at planning the material needs of her kitchen, she can add those specialties important to her everyday life. For instance, a radio. The news, music or her favorite radio serial brought into the kitchen can brighten her day. The telephone—how much more handy it would be on her kitchen desk when Mrs. Jones called “in the middle of a cake.” A bulletin board—calendars and dates could be posted. A high kitchen stool with ladder combination—the latter’s a means to the loftiest cupboard. In-Betweens Are Bugbears

Since Mrs. Homemaker buys her three main work centers, the range, refrigerator and sink, they are usually efficiently designed, but the bugbear of her kitchen is the “in-between”—the cupboards, cabinets, storage places.

The best way to have an ideal kitchen cupboard arrangement is for Mrs. Homemaker to sketch the shelves and drawers to fit the equipment she has on hand and according to the tasks she has to do. Then she can give this rough layout to the carpenter or take it with her if she’s buying a ready-made unit.

In planning her cupboards she’ll profit by past experiences. Practicality will be her motto and efficiency her goal. For instance little things like handles for drawers and cupboard doors. They needn’t be centered on the space—she can place them where they are most convenient to reach.