

A kitchen that works

Pay attention to function as you prepare your special holiday dishes **BY IRENE TURNBULL**

During the Holiday Season, we really need our kitchens to do their best work, as we put our heart and soul into delivering our culinary tokens of love and caring for our families and friends. Function in our work space really matters.

So, if you're thinking about a kitchen reno anytime soon, what better opportunity to pay focused attention to what makes your routines easier or more difficult — what works and what doesn't — as we prepare and serve the foods we love to share.

Good planning depends on the quality of information on which you build. You might not be able to stop and make a note about how difficult it is to read the instructions on a package because of poor lighting, or to find a landing spot for the hot pot you are holding. But if you keep a note pad handy, when you take a break, simply jotting down these problems will help you and your kitchen designer deliver a high performance kitchen space.

First of all, it's important to note that style has little to do with function; and efficiency is not synonymous with size!

Large kitchens can be extremely inefficient and small ones can be amazingly functional. There are cabinetry options in all price categories — budget, medium and high. The quality of cabinetry and working hardware such as drawer slides, hinges, and accessories such as pull-outs, cutlery inserts, drawers versus doors — all affect efficiency, quality and price.

Professionals use formulas to establish optimum distances between the key appliances and work areas: fridge, stove, sink and countertops. However, in today's kitchens, where wall ovens and stove tops are common the traditional "triangle" can look somewhat distorted. The important thing is that all appliances are easy to access, with sufficient "pivoting room" and "drop space" on counters, and turning radius for doors and drawers to open properly.

Here's a checklist of things to pay attention to if you are planning a new kitchen:

- Are you planning to change because you want a new look? If so, are you happy with your current layout? Are you planning to upgrade appliances? Will this change your existing layout, or are you replacing existing appliances with same size new ones?

- Is your lighting sufficient? Lighting is an essential part of good kitchen design. Under-cabinet lighting is not the same as good overhead lighting. Hanging pendants over islands are frequently added for aesthetic appeal but in open concepts often block views and do not provide good task lighting if the island is doubling as a work surface. Pay attention to what you prefer.



- Ovens come in many forms, from traditional all-in-one stove top and oven slide-in models to separate wall ovens and stove tops. Wall ovens offer the opportunity to raise the door opening height for easier access, particularly if bending and lifting from a traditional oven is difficult. Do you require double ovens, or some other combination stacked in a wall mount?

- Dishwashers need to be close to sinks, but whether they're on the right- or left-hand side is more a matter of cabinetry design, flexibility and personal preference. Think about which way you prefer to work when loading and unloading. To the left or to the right? Where do your dishes go when you empty the dishwasher? You need a clear pathway to your storage area.

- Do you want an island or peninsula? Do you want this to accommodate seating? Does your island need to double as a work surface? Think how you will use your island or peninsula. Too large is as much a problem as too small. You don't want to walk around these extended surfaces to get to the oven or refrigerator.

- Stovetops require venting, but there are choices. If space is a premium, under-cabinet mounted options allow for extra storage. But keep in mind the interior space of the upper cabinet is somewhat reduced by the exhaust requirements hidden inside. Microwaves also can be incorporated into this option, but it's important to note that access to the microwave is over the stovetop and can be inconvenient over hot burners and a bit high to reach.

- Your height and physical capabilities impact your ability to access cupboards. Full extension drawers provide more accessible storage than cupboards with shelves in under-counter cabinets and can include specific design features such as cutlery trays, spice and condiment racks, small appliance provisions and waste bins.

With attention to your needs, your kitchen can be successfully planned to deliver functional efficiency in a style best suited to your unique taste.

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