

## **COOKING UP A PLAN**

### **Organizing In The Kitchen**

The kitchen is an area of your home which gets used more often than most other areas. It stands to reason, that if your kitchen were more organized and simple to use, that your life would feel easier. Here are ten easy steps to organize your kitchen, and make family life flow more smoothly when it comes to meal preparation.

1. Pull everything out of each cabinet and go through it. Discard or donate those things which aren't frequently used, duplicate items, broken items, or things you forgot you had. Do this with each cabinet and drawer, setting up separate areas on the floor for each group. Be ruthless. Most kitchens are short on storage space, so the goal is to only have things you love and use.
2. After your cabinets are all empty, consider what is best for you in terms of how to group items. Sort all your baking items and pile them together. Sort your cooking items and pile them together. Group the dishes you eat from, glassware, holiday or other seasonal items that only get used once or twice a year, as well as those special entertaining or serving pieces that are only used occasionally.
3. Now that you have groups laid out on the floor, decide what space makes the most sense for them to live. Cooking and baking pieces should be kept close to where you do food preparation. Cooking utensils should be in the drawer nearest to the food preparation area as well. Glassware might be best near the sink or refrigerator. Make a coffee or tea station where you have the coffee and tea, sugar, mugs, and filters, and try to place it near the water source. This way you avoid going back and forth across the kitchen for the things you need just to make your morning beverage. Storing things where they are used and with the other items they are used along with, helps to simplify things.
4. Containerize inside your cabinets. Group together packets of sauce mixes, gravy mixes, hot cereal packets, hot cocoa envelopes, and put them into small plastic containers to avoid them being scattered all over the cabinet. Use clear plastic shoeboxes to store food that is in tiny boxes such as Jell-O or pudding mix.
5. Discard containers without lids and store the remaining plastic containers either with the lids on them, or store the lids in another larger container so they all stay together. Do the same with the lids for your pots and pans. A large clear plastic box will keep them nicely together and on their sides, or get a wire rack that will also store them on their sides in the cabinet.

6. Use vertical space. Place hooks under cabinets to hold mugs above the countertop, or hang a stemware rack in the same spot for wine glasses, which will free up a lot of space in the cabinet above. Hang adhesive hooks on the inside of cabinet doors or pantry doors to hold tools such as measuring cups, oven mitts, or other kitchen gadgets. Consider using wall space or a ceiling rack to hang functional items such as pots and pans. Remember that any space you can use to hang something will free up flat space inside a cabinet.
7. Use lazy susans (turntables) to hold things such as oils, vinegars, and other cooking ingredients, as well as spices, vitamins or medications. You can also use a few lazy susans in your refrigerator. One will keep beverages, so nothing ever hides in the back to spoil or freeze, and use one on another shelf to keep leftovers or small jars of pickles, olives, or other small food items.
8. Get some drawer dividers for your cooking utensil drawers and your “junk drawers”. Everyone needs a place to keep those little miscellaneous things, but they don’t have to be overflowing and junky. Drawer dividers will allow you to assign a little spot for each thing and you’ll be able to find things when you need them.
9. Get a magnetic sorter box to hang on the side of the fridge for coupons, takeout menus, a notepad and pen, and other papers that tend to accumulate on the countertops. Each type of paper should have its own section in the sorter.
10. Keep trash bags near the trashcan and throw a stack of loose bags into the bottom of the can. That way, when you pull out one bag, there is already another one right below it waiting to be used. If you put your trash out at the curb one night a week, use that time to clean out your refrigerator each week too. Peek in there and see what food needs to be pitched, throw it out, and then take the trash out to the curb immediately after. If you do the cleaning out weekly, you’ll find that your refrigerator will stay current and you’ll never have a whole shelf being taken up by old moldy food.

Your personal work style will determine where you store and use the items in your kitchen, but the goal is to get that room and its contents to be serving your needs as smoothly and efficiently as possible. If you invest the time and energy into decluttering and organizing your kitchen, it is an investment that will pay off in happiness for years to come.

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