

Good design can make kitchen work for you

If cooking a meal tires you out before the food get to the table, it may not be due to the complexity of your menus or the size of your family.

Your kitchen itself may be the culprit!

A kitchen can be a showplace of handsome cabinets and appliances and yet be inefficient if its layout doesn't allow for a good working pattern," notes General Electric's William Ketcham, a certified kitchen designer and manager of GE's Kitchen Design Studio. "The kitchen that works for — not against — you is one that is based on the natural rhythm of cooking."

What is that rhythm? Kitchen work patterns show that movements flows from storage through preparation of cooking and serving. This flow corresponds to three main activity centers — refrigeration, sink area and range. It's how you arrange these centers that maximizes efficiency and makes meal preparation easier.

If you have a one-wall kitchen, often found in apartments and vacation homes where space is at a premium, the logical placement of appliances is in a line from refrigerator to sink to range. In other basic kitchen layouts such as the corridor, L-shape, U-shape and and L and U with islands, the sequence is the same. The three centers are arranged to form a triangle.

"Imagine a triangle with the sides drawn from the center of the refrigerator to that of the sink, from the sink to the center of the range and then back to the refrigerator," explains Ketcham. "This is the work triangle and it is the single most important device used in analyzing a kitchen design."

For a kitchen to be truly efficient, the total length of these three sides should measure between 13 and 22 feet. No single side should be shorter than 4.5 feet in order to allow for

comfortable movement and counter and storage space, or longer than seven and one-fourth feet to avoid excess walking.

Ideally, the refrigeration-storage area will be near the back or entry door to the kitchen and the cooking and serving center nearest the area where most meals are enjoyed — with the sink center in between.

The three work centers may overlap slightly and share space. The important factor is having the right area at the right spot.

"This almost forces you into adequate storage of all kinds," says Ketcham.

"It becomes second nature to store your various utensils and supplies closest to where you use them."

Pots and pans, plus utensils such as spatulas, slotted spoons and cooking thermometers should be kept in the range center. Utensils used in food preparation, mixing bowls, measuring cups, colanders, dishes and cleaning supplies — are best stored in the sink area. Dry goods and perishables are conveniently stored in and around the refrigerator.

Be sure to follow the work triangle concept when adding new appliances to the kitchen. Dishwashers and trash compactors, for example, should be located in the sink center, as should electric can openers, mixers, blenders and food processors.

Microwave ovens, a popular addition to many of today's kitchens, can be logically placed in either the traditional range area or within the refrigeration center, taking advantage of their time-saving defrost and quick reheating capabilities.

"Kitchens are for cooking," notes Ketcham, "and with the work triangle as the foundation of your kitchen layout, you'll find that cooking is less a chore than a pleasure."

Here are hints to avoid costly decorating mistakes

Avoiding decorating mistakes: Are you eager to start decorating but fearful of making a dreadful mistake? Costly and time wasting decorating errors are due to the inability to visualize — something the trained interior designer knows how to do very well.

However, you don't have to hire a designer to do the inside of your house. You can teach yourself how to make excellent design decisions by avoiding some of the most common decorations errors: Don't be in a hurry to clutter your rooms with new furniture and accessories. A room will end up having more character if you fill it up slowly with well-loved and carefully chosen pieces.

Wrong scale: Beware of choosing pieces too big or too small for the room. A delicate love-seat would look ridiculous in a huge room, just as a tiny painting over an extra-long sofa would be lost. Keep scale in mind

when selecting wallpaper patterns, too — giant flowers don't go in a tiny kitchen area.

Chopping up a house with entirely different decorating schemes and colors: The White House may be big enough to have a "Red" room, a "Blue" room, etc., but smaller houses need to be decorated with consistency. Your house will feel larger if the color flow is smooth and coordinated, and furnishing create a similar mood throughout the house.

Decorating to impress other instead of considering your own needs: If you have four active children and several dogs, white carpets, silk upholstery and crystal accessories will be impractical. Be realistic!

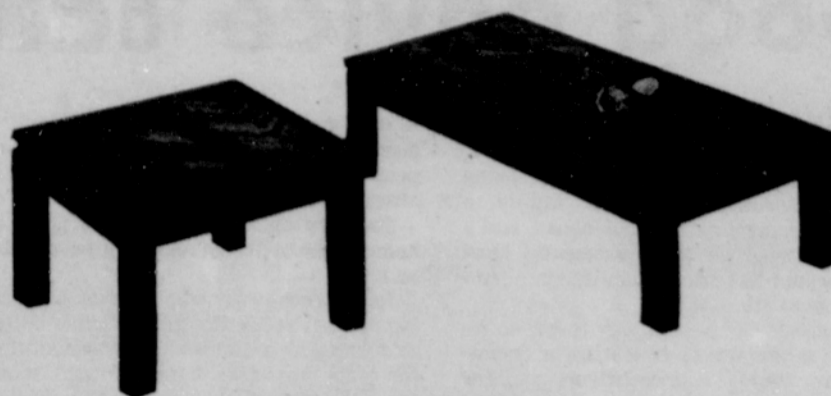
Choosing fads instead of classics: Faddish decors may catch your attention for a while, but get boring as time goes by and the fashion changes. Classic styles retain their attractiveness

over time, so why not choose what is more enduring? Consult an in-store designer about what styles fall under the category "classic."

Choosing wall colors and upholstery from small swatches: If you like the color on a small paint chips, pick the next lightest shade for walls and two shades lighter for ceiling. If you have difficulty visualizing, invest in at least two yards to drape over a chair before making a decision.

Placing all the furniture around the walls: Grouping furniture in a room is often more interesting than lining all of the walls with it. Experiment with positioning your chairs and sofa perpendicular to the wall, instead of flat against it.

Inappropriate accessorizing: A plastic bowl doesn't fit into a formal living room, nor do Dresden china candlesticks belong in a casual family room. Try to match things correctly.



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