

The organized Kitchenpg2-5
Kitchen organizing tips.....pg6-7
10 days to a spotless and an organized kitchen..pg 8-10
9 traits of organized kitchenspg11

The organized Kitchen

http://allbrightideas.com/the_organized_kitchen.htm

Having an organized kitchen will increase your productivity, decrease your stress, and help you to be in control. So open your kitchen and mind to some creative and basic ways to organize your kitchen.

Step 1

□ Finding Wasted Space

The first step is to learn where wasted space is. Begin by opening all your kitchen cabinets and drawers. Take a step back to view them. Do you have empty space between the top of canned goods and the shelf above them? Look at the dinnerware cabinet. Are there inches of empty space between the plates and the shelf above? Now look in your drawers. Are you wasting the height of your drawers? Do you have a 2" high utensil organizer in a 4" high drawer? If so, this will leave wasted space between the utensils and the top of the drawer. Maximize space by either moving items to a more appropriate space or by using organizers that will allow you to utilize all the space. Vertical space in drawers is frequently not maximized because people don't know how to use it completely.

Step 2

□ "Move Out" of Your Kitchen

The second step is to "move out" of your kitchen for a day. Take everything out of the cabinets and drawers. Group items by category – cereals, baking ingredients, spices, pasta, utensils, pots, small appliances, etc. If you cannot devote a minimum of four hours at one interval, then break the procedure into small achievable segments—one category at a time.

Also take your small appliances off of your countertops. You'll gain more working space and your countertops will look neat! Work hard to get your appliances in your cabinets. Be optimistic!

Look to see what you can discard or give away. If you have a difficult time parting with things, try to think of the less fortunate people who can use them. You don't need three gelatin molds or three citrus peelers. If you haven't used something in a year, get rid of it.

Make sure everything you use in the kitchen is in the kitchen. Bring in the old turkey roaster from the basement and the scissors from the office! Wipe shelves, drawers, and organizers with a damp cloth.

Step 3

□ **Container Storage**

Transfer boxed or bagged food items into clear containers. Storage in clear containers will alert you when the item is running low. This will help eliminate the need for a last minute trip to the grocery store for cereal.

Choose square or rectangular containers over round or oval ones. You lose storage space on curves. Do you remember how to look for wasted space? Put two round containers side by side and two square containers side by side. Which pair has unused space between the containers? Now you are catching on!

Step 4

□ **"Moving Back " into Your Kitchen**

The fourth step is to find the most appropriate place to store items as you "move back" into your kitchen. Keep two considerations in mind – convenience and space. You want the location of an item to be convenient, i.e., cooking utensils next to the stove, but if the space is not appropriate, reconsider the location. If the drawer next to the stove is a small drawer, don't divide the utensils between two drawers. It will take twice as long to locate a utensil. Instead put the utensils in one large drawer two steps away.

Place categorized items together on the same shelves or in the same drawers. Don't limit yourself to a particular cabinet shelf because of height. These days, most shelves are easy to adjust. Arrange food items in an orderly way within the categories -- alphabetical, height. Alphabetize your spices. Could you imagine trying to find a spice in the grocery store if the spices were not in alphabetical order?

Small appliances can be tricky to store. If you have spinning shelves in a base cabinet, consider storing your small appliances there. Another option is to store appliances on shelves that pull out. This eliminates the need to take out other appliances to retrieve the one stored in the back.

Baking ingredients, condiments, spices, and mixes store well in a corner wall cabinet with spinning shelves. A 3-tier shelf is ideal.

Placement Tips

- *Don't store perishable foods over the stovetop.*
- *Consider storing garbage cans under the sink and above the sink store dish washing detergent, gloves, scouring pads. You won't need to bend as much.*
- *Place an attractive wooden spice rack on the wall. Saves space and time.*
- *Alphabetize your spices.*
- *Keep a box of baking soda in a cabinet near the stove for grease fires.*

Step 5

□ Maximizing Space

If you have a corner wall cabinet without spinning shelves, consider installing them. This will allow easy access to the back of corner units that are deep and difficult to reach. Spinning shelves can be installed to have 1, 2, 3, or 4 durable shelves with one pole in the center. Three shelves usually work best. The cost of a kit ranges from \$65.00 to \$100.00. Free standing Lazy Susan's can be used, but they usually are not as durable or weight tolerant.

If you need a convenient place to store sponges, scrub pads, rings, etc., install a tilt down sink tray. This allows you to use the unused space in front of your kitchen sink where there is a cabinetry panel. You can install a kit yourself.

If there is open space between the top of your cabinets and the ceiling, store items that will add a decorative touch. Wicker baskets or pretty bowls can hold infrequently used items such as Jello molds, Popsicle molds, and cookie cutters.

Compare vertical storage to horizontal storage. Try storing cookie sheets, jelly roll pans, cooling racks, cutting boards on their side instead of laying flat.

Step 6

□ Maintaining Organization

Now that everything has a place it will be easy to maintain organization. A simple rule to follow is "do it now." It takes a few seconds to put something away now. It will take more time and more effort to put something away at a later time. The more you are vigilant about putting things away the easier it will become. Studies show that it takes 21 days to form a habit so stick to it!

□ Pantry Stock

Every household will vary on what items to keep on hand. In time you will get to know what you need and don't need. Be careful not to over buy if a food item has a short expiration date.

Keep an ongoing grocery list. Place an attractive magnetic list pad on your refrigerator for everyone to add to. If you would like your grocery-shopping trip to be more organized, create a template for your grocery list. Make the template by folding an 8 ½" x 11" sheet of paper to create blocks inside to correspond with the number of aisles in your grocery store. Next outline the blocks with pencil and label each block according to the aisles in the store. The first block might be "Produce" and the second might be "Frozen and Dairy". Once you have the template made, have it photocopied 25 times (6 months worth). Put a copy on the refrigerator. Now everyone can add the item under the appropriate aisle.

Keep items on hand for unexpected company. Frozen chicken breasts can be quickly thawed in the microwave to make a dish with a seasoning packet. Keep spaghetti and a jar of sauce in stock if you prefer to keep it simple. Keep bagels and a can of orange juice concentrate in the freezer for unexpected overnight guests. A brownie mix is a quick dessert for company or taking it along to a cook out. Keep a box of crackers and a block of cheese on hand to offer a snack to afternoon or evening guests. Crackers and cheese are also ideal for young guests. Use and replace these items periodically to keep them tasty. The following lists will give you a starting point of what to purchase for your kitchen. Add to the lists as needed.

Kitchen organizing tips

<http://www.organized-mom.com/kitchen-organizing-tips.shtml>

When your kitchen is tidy and organized you'll save a lot of time and grief when preparing your meals. These easy kitchen organizing tips will make your kitchen pleasant and welcoming.

A lot of the times we mean to get in there and finally organize the kitchen, but once things get out of control the job can seem so daunting and you just don't know where to start.

The best way to start a big task is to start small and think of one thing at a time. If you think of everything you need to do you may just never do it!

Here are some easy kitchen organizing tips:

- ❑ **Mentally Prepare** - Look in your kitchen and make a mental note of what belongs in there, what can be put away, what you don't need anymore, etc.
- ❑ **Organize Kitchen Cabinets** - Take everything out of your kitchen cabinets, clean, and place them back into different categories such as glasses, plates, baking trays and so on. If your cabinets are organized you will save a lot of time during cooking.
- ❑ **Clean your Pantry** - It's amazing the things you'll find stored in the back of a pantry. We often buy things we already have because we simply can't find them. So, take everything out of the pantry, clean and place back in categories. Use one shelf for dry foods such as cereals, pasta, etc. Use another for canned goods, and so on. Use baskets in your pantries for smaller items like stock cubes and gravy mixes. This will make them easier to find and avoid spillage from opened packets.
- ❑ **Use a Spice Rack** - By simply using a wall-mounted or counter top spice rack you can save a lot of cabinet space and have your spices close at hand. Clearly label your spices and place the ones you use more often towards the front of the rack.
- ❑ **Clear your Counter Tops** - Remove any items you don't use on a regular basis from your counter tops. Instead, store them in a cabinet or even your basement or garage (if you don't use them very often). Group appliances together for conveniences like the toaster and coffee pot.

- ❑ **Organize that Junk Drawer** - Okay, just because we all call it the "junk drawer" doesn't mean it shouldn't be organized. Take a look through and throw out any items you may not need. Place small baskets in there to store items like batteries, clips and all those other interesting things we seem to collect in our kitchens.

- ❑ **Clean up your Cleaning Products** - Buy an inexpensive plastic dish drainer and place it under your sink. These make it easy for you to organize cleaning products, sponges, etc. Please remember to keep a lock on all cabinets with dangerous items if you have young children.

- ❑ **Clean that Fridge** - Every time you go grocery shopping clean out your fridge. You'll find lots of things in there which have gone bad, are empty, etc. Throw out all these items and give your fridge a good wipe. Bacteria in fridges can accumulate quickly so you want to make sure this area is cleaned weekly.

- ❑ **Set up a Message Station** - If your kitchen allows, set up a specific place for the telephone, messages, keys, etc. I have a small peg board where I keep reminders and messages. Underneath that there's a wall-mounted key rack, and under that a small desk with the telephone, a basket for mail, a calendar and pens and paper for writing. Having an area like this can save you tons of time and you won't lose messages or mail again. If you don't have space for this in your kitchen then place it in your hallway or living room.

- ❑ **Invest and be Clutter Free** - Now you can find all sorts of inexpensive organizing products and gadgets for your kitchen and home. If possible invest in a few of these as they will make your job much easier. A simple pegboard where you can keep photos, messages or your kids works of art can be a lifesaver. The same thing goes for a plastic bag organizer or good spice rack. Invest a little and you'll reap the rewards in time saved and much more pleasant kitchen to cook in.

For lots of easy kid friendly recipes, nutrition information, meal planning tips and fun kid cooking projects, visit <http://www.easy-kid-recipes.com>.

10 days to a spotless and an organized kitchen

<http://www.organized-mom.com/articles/031403c.shtml>

Sometimes it helps to organize a room all at once. However, for home-business owners, spending another entire day in the house isn't always a desirable thing. What may be more desirable is to spend 60-minutes each day working on a project. The steps below will assist you (as they have me) to reorganize your kitchen.

Day 1

~-if you don't have a pad on your refrigerator, set aside a piece of paper somewhere in the kitchen for the next 10 days. Use the top part of the page for "things to buy" and the lower half for other notes.

~-put a chair in the middle of the kitchen floor and assess what needs to be done. Make a list.

~-start to pay attention to where you are placing things that are in the dishwasher. Take a mental note of what items are in cabinets that would be better off somewhere else.

~-take your step ladder out, clean the light fixtures and change any bulbs that aren't working.

Day 2

~-Question: What does an empty box, a step ladder, a telephone book, a cloth, a car and one hour have in common?

~-Answer: They're what you'll need to clean the pantry or if you don't have one, your food cupboards. Remove all items you haven't used in the past year... or won't use in the next few months. Make sure everything is packed properly for storage. Then you can put unused/unwanted food in the box, contact your local non-profit food pantry, and put the box in your car (for now).

Day 3

~-If you have a self-cleaning oven, turn it on when you wake up. If not, spray or clean the inside of the oven. Then later, rinse it off.

--Defrost the refrigerator. It's good to put everything in coolers then clean when everything is defrosted. Even frost-free's need cleaning every now and then.

Day 4

--Put the stove burners, other stove and fan parts in the dishwasher. Clean the top of the range and fan.

--Clean the inside of the dishwasher and outside of all appliances. Add jet dry to the dishwasher.

Day 5

--By now you should have a nice list of items you may want to purchase... such as new shelving paper, food or containers, cleaning supplies, ect. So go out, buy yourself lunch, go shopping, and bring the box of donated food to your local food pantry.

--If you don't have a shopping pad on your refrigerator, consider adding "small pad and magnetic strip" to your shopping list. Then when you get home, glue the magnet to the back of the pad.

--Make your life easier in the kitchen. Purchase two inexpensive and dishwasher proof items - a bag of plastic clothes pins and a pair of scissors. Use the clothes pins to close bags of chips, cereals, pasta, etc. Scissors that stay in the kitchen come in handy for many things.

Day 6

--Spend an hour cleaning the cabinets closest to the dishwasher. Reline them with new shelving paper, if necessary.

--Find covers for any pots, pans, Tupperware and the like. Put any object that doesn't have a cover in a bag.

Day 7

--Find a piece of paper and take everything out of the bag you've saved from day six.

--Write down the name of the product (Revereware, Farberware, Tupperware, Rubbermaid, etc.) and measurements (2 quarts, 8 inches, etc.). Or do what I

prefer. Draw the outline of the pot, cover, or container on a piece of paper with the product's name in the middle of the circle.

--Spend the rest of the hour cleaning and reorganizing the cabinets.

Day 8

--Today is Kitchen Floor Day. 'Nuff said

--Clean the windows. Take measurements for a second set of curtains.

Day 9

--Make a trip to Goodwill, Salvation Army, or your favorite thrift store to find the covers (or bottoms) of pots, rubber goods, etc. You'll be surprised what you can find for between 69c-\$2.00!

--And look for a second set of curtains to use, too.

Day 10

--Go to the store. Buy yourself some flowers, a candle, or something to celebrate!

--Go home, place a chair in the middle of the kitchen floor and enjoy all you have accomplished!

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9 traits of organized kitchens

<http://www.creativehomemaking.com/articles/073002c.shtml>

1. The number one rule of an organized kitchen is to store items where you use them. Put your plates near the table, glasses near the fridge and cutting knives and board near island or counter where you cut up produce.

2. If you do any baking, set up a baking section. Store together all items you use when baking.

3. Clean and organize your fridge and freezer. Do a quick upkeep once a week on trash day. If you don't use it, get rid of it.

4. Move the excess clutter. For example, seasonally used items such as platters and holiday dishes are better stored in a basement or attic. Unless you have a very large kitchen, it is best to remove items that are not used on a regular basis.

5. How many glasses do you really use between dish washings? Store only as many as you regularly use (glasses, dishes, wine glasses), and place the extras in storage.

6. Go through your cookbooks and keep in the kitchen only the ones you use regularly. Seasonal cookbooks can be stored with your holiday dinnerware, others can be kept elsewhere or given away.

7. Here's a tough one. If you don't use it every day, remove it from your counters. So many of us complain about not having enough counter space yet we crowd the counters with things we don't even use.

8. Check out all the racks and drawer units on the market to more efficiently store all your kitchen items. You will find a large selection at home stores around the country.

9. Set up a small pantry somewhere in your home for extra cans of soup, coffee and other essentials. You'll save money by buying in bulk or during sales and you'll save space in the kitchen. A small closet can easily be converted to a pantry. Once you have one you'll never want to be "pantry-less" again.

Barbara Myers is a professional organizer and author. Free tips booklet and e-zine to help you take control of your time by organizing your life. Visit <http://www.ineedmoretime.com>.