

The Organized Kitchen

By Amy Simone, A Space in Time

As most people's command central of the home the kitchen is a critical spot to keep organized. How easy is it to cook dinner when you first need to clear off a pile of mail from the counter? Likewise, how frustrating is it when you want to bake cookies and an avalanche of bakeware occurs as you try to pull out a cookie sheet. Let's leave the avalanches to the mountains and restore some calm to your kitchen.

My clients' top three complaints with their kitchens are:

- Piles of paper (mail, homework) taking over valuable counter space
- Cluttered cabinets and drawers, making it hard to find items
- Not knowing what essentials need to be stored in the kitchen

Let's begin with the issue of paper piles. Mail and homework naturally land in the kitchen because it's a convenient dropping point. If you're standing at the kitchen counter sorting your mail so you can recycle as you go, then that is fine. But if days (or weeks!) of paperwork has started putting down roots in your kitchen then it's time to kick it out. Locate an alternate paperwork station that's near, but not in, the kitchen. Utilize available wall space by installing wall pockets, or position a small desk close to the kitchen to give paperwork a proper processing space. If there truly are no other options for paperwork next to your kitchen, then at least contain the piles in no more than 3 vertically stacking in/out trays.

As for the matter of cluttered cabinets and drawers, let's assume that the volume of goods stored in your cabinets and drawers is reasonable. Let's also assume that you're happy with where the items are housed. For example, the cabinet containing storage containers should be located near the counter where you would be filling the containers with leftovers. With those criteria met, you can feel comfortable purchasing some bins, shelves, spice steps, etc. My favorite resource is The Container Store but you can find some of the same items locally at Homeport (basement level), Bed, Bath and Beyond, or at the hardware store. Measure your cabinet and drawer dimensions in addition to the general dimensions of the items to be contained and then shop away! Buy high-quality containers that can be used for other purposes as your needs change.

Okay, now we're down to the issue of having too much stuff. My rule of thumb is that every kitchen tool should have at least 2 functions. Despite being an avid baker, I have never owned a flour sifter. I can easily sift flour with mesh sieves and those can also drain pasta and be used to rinse fruit and vegetables. Weed out anything that doesn't serve multiple purposes unless a specialty item really does make your life easier. Even then, you can choose a tool that offers several options. My panini grill, for example, has plates that reverse to griddle surfaces as well as a second set of plates on which to make waffles. Make your tools justify the space that they take in your valuable kitchen real estate!

Serving pieces and specialty cookware used only on holidays do not need to be stored in the kitchen if they will clutter your space. Placing those items in a pantry, closet, the basement or the attic would be fine as long as the items are still accessible for the rare occasions when you need them.

Give your kitchen a little love and attention and you will appreciate how smooth life can be with an organized kitchen!