



The Kitchen & Bath Insider[®]

Paul Bookbinder, M.I.D.

Size Doesn't Matter!

Every woman dreams of having a really *big* kitchen . . . but, (and you may have heard this before), *size does not matter!* It's what you put in the kitchen and how you arrange it that counts. A small space can be designed so that it maximizes its potential, increasing its functionality and making it feel bigger than it actually is. By creating the illusion of a larger space you'll feel like you have all the room that you need and by adding internal accessories to the cabinets your storage needs can be satisfied as well.

In a size impaired (size challenged?) kitchen, the first impulse is to use wall cabinets that extend to the ceiling. While this will add an extra shelf in each cabinet it will also close in the room, making it appear smaller. If you have 96" ceilings, stick with standard 30" or 36" high wall cabinets, but order an extra shelf for each one. In most kitchens, cabinets are not used to their maximum potential due to a lack of shelving. Frequently an extra shelf in a standard height cabinet can increase its useful capacity by about 20%.

Consider adding open shelving between a couple of the wall cabinets. Although this will not actually increase your storage capacity, this technique will help to make the kitchen look larger.

Don't close off the soffit (the space above the cabinets). By leaving the tops of the cabinets open it makes for an "airier" look and you can store some decorative cookware there. Keep all the cabinets level with each other rather than jogging them up and down. By keeping the cabinets level, including open shelving and leaving the soffit open, it draws your eye horizontally instead of vertically, making the space appear larger.

If possible, enlarge the opening into the kitchen so that it flows into the room adjacent to it. This will create the illusion of more space. Colors also affect the illusion of size in a room. Use of muted colors in a small kitchen will make the room appear larger.

The best way to maximize storage space in any size kitchen is with accessories like lazy-Susans, roll-out trays and tilt drawers. Corners are almost impossible to avoid in some kitchen designs and if you have a corner the best way to deal with it is to install lazy-Susans in the corner cabinets. Although they are not 100% efficient, (you lose some space on the sides), it makes everything much easier to reach. And you can also add an additional shelf to a lazy-Susan or adjust the bottom shelf up several inches to allow you to use the base of the cabinet as an additional shelf. Avoid blind-corner cabinets at all costs! Those are the horrible cabinets which are jammed into corners to fill up space. If there is no way to avoid having a blind-corner base cabinet insist on ½ moon shelves, which make it the space more accessible.

Roll-out trays enable you to pull out all the items in a base cabinet so that they are easily reachable without having to dig around in the back for something you lost several years ago! It's also a lot easier on your back because you don't have to bend down so far to retrieve pots and pans.

Tilt-trays by the sink and cooktop are a nice place to store sponges, soap pads, etc., making the counter top look less cluttered.

If size is what really counts, you may have to expand past the borders of your present home and your present budget. But, by manipulating some design elements in the kitchen and maximizing the internal space, your undersized kitchen can feel and act much bigger than you ever thought possible.