

Getting your Kitchen in Order

Organizing the kitchen cabinets can be a full day's work. If you can't spare an entire day, break the task down into smaller jobs. Use these tips to help you get a handle on organizing your cabinets & other kitchen storage areas:

Creating Stations

- Start by making a quick list of all of the activities that take place in your kitchen. These might include baking, food prep, opening mail and even homework.
- Think about where in the kitchen you do these activities and what tools you need to do them. Now look at the nearby storage areas in each of those activity areas. Tools should be stored as close as possible to where you use them. For example, keep the toaster near the breadbox, the pots and pans near the stove and the coffeemaker near the sink.
- Consider expanding your current storage by adding hooks, hanging items from under cabinets or the ceiling or adding a pegboard or rail system that holds utensils, spices or other smaller items. Replace appliances as needed with under-cabinet mounted versions to free up counter space or move items such as a microwave to a rolling cart.

Organizing Cabinets

- Take everything out of the cabinet you are working on. Throw away plastic containers without lids and give away those in odd sizes that you never use.
- Get rid of excessive collections of coffee mugs, glasses, plastic wear or other items that tend to multiply on their own.
- The most efficient place to store dishes, glassware and silverware is close to your dishwasher or sink, so that it's fast and easy to put them away after being washed.
- Consider storing dishes close to the table that your family uses most. This makes it easier for a helper to be able to get them on the table without getting in the way of the cook in the food preparation zone.
- Optimize storage space for dishes by installing a wire shelf unit attached to the underside of your existing shelving. This means there is less stacking of dishes and bowls on top of one another and makes them easier to access.
- Glassware should be stored upside down to keep the inside dust-free. Stemware can be hung by using an organizing product that clips to the underside of a shelf.

Organizing Kitchen Drawers

- Start with your silver-wear drawer. Take out the cutlery tray (or purchase one if you don't have one) and anything else in the drawer. Empty the tray and place it back in the drawer. Only put back the knives, forks and spoons. Study the remaining items left over and see which items are necessary (or need to be located in this location). Only keep the essentials and donate the rest.
- Next task – the junk drawer. Empty it and sort through all items to only keep what you really use (throw out those expired coupons, pens that don't work and anything you just don't need). Use a larger cutlery tray or other drawer dividers to create a place for everything you keep. Group similar items together and use re-sealable storage bags or rubber bands to keep items together (such as cookie cutters or chopsticks).
- Go through all potholders and dishtowels. Get rid of worn rags and only keep 7 to 10 rags at the most (this should give you at least a week's supply).

Alison Caputo is the managing partner of Clarity Consulting, LLC. She is an Organizational Consultant, Interior Designer and Speaker. She helps individuals, families and business owners create a functional space with an emphasis on aesthetics. Visit www.claritysite.com for free tips and links about getting organized with design in mind.
Resource: 'Organizing Plain & Simple' by Donna Smallin