



## Design a Kitchen for your Lifestyle



Your kitchen is the hardest working room in your house. And it's often the heart of your home. Make the most of it by designing a room that suits your life and your lifestyle with beautiful kitchen cabinet designs.

Whether you have special accessibility needs, want to accommodate multiple cooks in the kitchen or just want to show off a special collection in your kitchen cabinets, StarMark Cabinetry Specialists can provide thoughtful design ideas and inspiration to make your kitchen functional and fabulous.

### **Wheelchair Accessibility**

It's possible to enhance the accessibility and convenience of your kitchen without sacrificing beauty. All it takes is a little planning.

To accommodate a wheelchair, make sure your kitchen has adequate floor space – 48 to 60 inches between counter tops is recommended. Have multiple counter heights or pull out bread boards for work space, and look for base cabinets with a higher, deeper toe kick. Install a lowered sink with open space underneath, but make sure exposed pipes are insulated to prevent injury. Look for sinks that can be raised and lowered for multiple person use, and install dishwashers at an elevated height.

Lower the height of your cooktop, and have a separate oven. Both should have handles and knobs that are accessible from the front. Place the microwave on a low counter top or under the counter. The refrigerator should either be side-by-side or have the freezer on the bottom.

Store dinnerware, tableware, and glassware on open shelves or roll out trays in base cabinets. Use roll out trays and revolving shelves for smaller items. Clear glass door inserts on cabinets make it easy to see what's behind them at a glance.

### **Kitchen Technology**

Today's kitchen needn't be cut off from the rest of the house – or the rest of the world. Whether you listen to music, watch TV, or access the Internet while preparing meals, it's easy to stay connected without sacrificing style.

If music keeps you moving, install a whole-house stereo system and hide speakers in your kitchen cabinets, or place an electrical outlet at the back of an island shelf for a CD player or radio.

Store a TV in an appliance garage with a tambour door or a pocket door that retracts and slides back into the cabinet and out of your way. Diagonal wall cabinets work well for TV's, but perhaps the most convenient location is the space above the refrigerator. It's out of the way, and can be seen from many spots in the kitchen.

Place a computer desk in or near the kitchen and out of the flow of traffic. If kids will be using it, make sure the desk is at a convenient height for them and use a slide out tray for the keyboard. You will also want to make sure the screen faces your line of sight so you can monitor the computer's use.

### **Displaying Your Collectibles**

A collection is as unique as the person who keeps it. The collection demonstrates a passion and possibly an obsession that pleases both those who collect and those who admire. There are several ways to showcase a collection, but keep these basic ideas in mind when you're thinking of kitchen cabinet designs.

The open space above wall cabinets is often used for this purpose. However, this space is difficult to keep clean. Consider stacked wall cabinets with glass doors to help keep dust away. Open shelves above the sink or stove and in base cabinets or islands are easier to maintain and provide access to items you may want to use.

### **Entertaining**

You've prepared the perfect hors d'oeuvres, chosen the perfect wines, and made the perfect dessert. Now serve your guests from the perfect kitchen with these ideas for entertaining with ease and style. Whether your entertaining style is a casual potluck, a martini mixer, or a formal dinner party, you'll want your guests to feel at home without feeling in the way.

When designing your home, maintain a great room effect between the kitchen and the living room so that nothing is closed off. Install a whole-house stereo system with

speakers hidden in your kitchen cabinets. Have a large serving island or peninsula with electrical outlets toward the back to keep cords from crock-pots and warming trays out of the way. Keep serving utensils near the serving area for easy access. On the island, install a sink located out of the cook's way and a separate ice-maker under the island counter for preparing beverages. Seating around the island is a must. Use swivel bar stools without backs so guests can visit in various directions during meal prep and then tuck the stools under and out of the way for serving. You could also have a raised bar area for standing.

### **Kids in the Kitchen**

From toddlers to teenagers, your kids will be in the kitchen with you and using this busy room themselves. That means you'll need to keep safety, convenience, and efficiency in mind when creating kitchen cabinet designs. The following information provides tips and ideas for making sure everyone in your family gets the most from the hardest working room in your home.

If you are thinking of starting a family soon, or if you have a baby now, consider leaving space in your kitchen for a bassinet or playpen, making sure it is away from stoves where hot food might be spilled. You may also want to include a large counter space for a bouncy seat, where baby can watch you in action.

Young toddlers are crawling, walking, and exploring their world. There are many safety issues to think about for this age. Avoid low display areas, unless you fill them with baby-safe items; avoid glass inserts on base cabinet doors, use plexiglass instead; have plenty of counter space around microwaves and stove tops to avoid spills; keep appliances and cords neatly hidden; and keep knives and cleaning products out of reach.

To make your life a little easier, store all of baby's foods and serving utensils in one cupboard close to the microwave for quick meal prep. And have snacks ready so baby can munch in his highchair while you work in the kitchen.

Grade-schoolers are using the microwave, building "ladders" to reach heights, and doing art projects or homework. Microwave location is critical for this age - it should not be above the cooking surface. Little ones might climb up onto the stove top to use the microwave. Place it on a low counter top, in a base cabinet, or in a wall cabinet where the bottom of the microwave is no more than 48 inches from the floor. Try to have some counter space in front or to the sides of the door.

Use roll out trays in base kitchen cabinets to store everyday, non-breakable dishes and cups, cereal boxes, and snack items. You will want to have a 36-inch high counter on your island or peninsula for budding artists to color or sculpt clay while you prepare dinner, for doing homework, or for serving snacks. Be sure your counter stools have high backs and arm rests to keep kids from slipping off.

Kids this age love to help. Let them! Keep your recycling center accessible so they can help clean up. Have them help load and unload the dishwasher by locating it close to the sink and storage space for dishes. Have a lower working counter 30 inches from the floor for kids to stand and help with meal prep.

Even young kids are using the computer these days, so consider locating a computer desk away from kitchen traffic, but where you can easily monitor its use.

Your pre-teens and teenagers are independent, busy, and bringing their friends home. Consider installing a second, smaller kitchen in a family or recreation room. (You can use it as a wet-bar later or as a prep kitchen for those big holiday dinners with the grandkids much later.) It could have a sink, a small refrigerator, a microwave, a pizza oven, a small dishwasher, and an ice maker. It should also have pantry space for quick-fix meals and snacks.

To make life easier in the main kitchen, locate your pantry out of the flow of traffic, and store quick-fix meals towards the front to avoid congestion. Have a side-by-side refrigerator with ice and water in the door. (Be sure to keep drinking cups next to the fridge.) Since these don't have a lot of freezer space, keep another freezer elsewhere. Install a warming drawer in your base cabinets to keep meals ready for kids eating in shifts.

There are also many ways for this age to have fun in the kitchen. Give them something to do by placing plastics, measuring cups, pots with lids, or toys in a base kitchen cabinet basket or drawer. Plastic spice containers make great shakers - whole bay leaves and kosher salt are fun ones to try. Popcorn, colorful noodles, and rice in child safe containers make interesting noises, too. Try removing the label from a small, clear, plastic container then fill it with water and add a drop of yellow vegetable oil. Your little one will love watching the oil "bubble" float as she tips it up and down.

### **Two Cooks in the Kitchen**

If you and your mate both like to spend time in the kitchen, consider yourself lucky! And consider some of these kitchen cabinet design ideas to make meal prep (and your relationship) run smoothly.

First you'll want to think about your work triangle, or your patterns of movement. For one cook it is from the sink to the range to the refrigerator. For a second cook it is from the second sink to the cook top to the refrigerator. These two triangles shouldn't interfere with one another. Each leg of the triangle should be a minimum of 4' and a maximum of 9'. Plan appropriate cabinetry between each appliance.

A kitchen island is a must in a two-person kitchen, and preferred over a peninsula, which can box one person in. You will want to have two sinks, one of them on the island, positioned so that the cooks aren't back-to-back and can easily converse. You won't want to be cooking cheek-to-cheek either, so make sure you leave 48 to 60 inches of space between your counter tops and island. A second dishwasher makes clean-up a lot easier,

too.

Separating the oven from the cook top, which can be located on the island, aids traffic flow. Separate frequently used utensils and hang pots and pans in a central location over the island. Use roll-out trays, tambour doors, and appliance garages to keep large appliances handy. Stagger the heights of your countertops to accommodate a taller or shorter cook. Create two preparation areas that have at least 36" of clear counter space to allow each cook their own area.