



*This helpful information is provided to you free of charge as a service of...*

## **Around Your House**

Improvements – Repairs – Remodeling – Handy Services

Phone (414) 546-0814 Fax (414) 546-3240

[www.aroundyourhouse.net](http://www.aroundyourhouse.net)

# **Planning Your Kitchen**

*by James R. Ziglinski, C.R.*



Many times, I have been asked, "How can a homeowner help in the concept or design to make such a transformation [as remodeling the kitchen] in their home?" Since this seems to be such an often asked question, I thought that it might be helpful to pass this information on to everyone.

No matter what room you wish to renovate, the basics are always the same. Start with your own lifestyle. Many people start by trying to fit in appliances they've passed in department stores. That's somewhat like putting the cart before the horse. Lifestyle has to do with you - your own personal "common sense" needs. For example, does your kitchen act as the family focal point or gathering place? Are you prone to creating large "everybody sit down" meals, or are you the "catch it on the fly" type? Family oriented "gourmets" have different needs than the microwave set, whose needs are much more fast-pace oriented.

Once you have got a clear definition of your own style and the room's actual function regarding your family, you can start to sketch out the room on graph paper. Start with just the room area, without cabinets, sinks or appliances. All of these items can be moved to suit your needs. Even some walls can be moved if necessary. Next, basic drafting and design comes into play. If you want, feel free to call this by another phrase so as not to be intimidated by the ominous sounding terms of "drafting" and "design". Drawing or sketching are good alternatives, phrasewise. A good, average size kitchen should be at least 100, but not exceeding 160 square feet in usable floor space. Shape, of course, depends on the design of your home and what you can do with the area which you have sketched out on the graph paper. There are four basic shapes to consider when planning the kitchen area. U-shaped kitchens are quite desirable because they can offer a continuous countertop area, short distances between appliances, and a work area most often undisturbed by through traffic. Corridor kitchens, on the other hand, may prove to be like cooking in a bowling alley. They are long, narrow, and oftentimes end up with dead ends and undesirable work layouts. L-shapes can use two walls for work areas, which is helpful for your appliance layout and work pattern. Finally, there is the kitchen island (or doughnut), which is liked just as often as it is hated, in my experience. The island can be a real asset if used properly, or a real hassle if it is not.

When considering the room shape and the desired kitchen shape, you should also consider the work pattern or "work triangle". This is the main artery of the kitchen layout. Though many think it's from a teenager's bedroom to the fridge, it is actually the triangle walk pattern from refrigerator to sink to range. Recommended average distances from fridge to sink are around 4'7"; from sink to range about 4'6"; and from range back to fridge about 4'9". The total triangle perimeter should come to approximately 13'10". The distance between the teenager's bedroom and the refrigerator should be as far as possible, but not as great as the distance to the nearest telephone or bathroom.

Now let's consider the cleanup area or the sink. The most comfortable work conditions here should allow for at least three feet of counter area to the right of the sink and 2 1/2 feet to the left, if possible. The range or cook area is slightly smaller; 2 feet of counter on one side with 9-10" on the other. This is mainly used for dishing up and transferring meals to the table.

Cabinets, countertops, and so on should reflect your own personality. Most times the mistakes are made here when swayed by trendy items. One common rage that comes to mind is the avocado green color scheme. What a flash in the pan that was! The same consideration must be made with the floor, walls, and lighting. Besides being warm and welcoming, be sure they are easy to clean and maintain. Moving on; with all of the cabinet styles to choose from, be double sure of the ones you finally decide upon. There is nothing worse than having your new cabinets installed only to find a set a week later that you like a hundred percent better. The same can be said for countertops. Plastic laminates today can look like plastic, simulated slate, leather, stone, and so on. Solid surface materials such as corian or romanite are also gaining popularity. Again, flooring also needs careful consideration. From experience, I implore you to think very carefully. Sheet goods may look great; however, pointed chair legs moving in and out may tend to separate the pattern from the base materials in some cases. Pets can easily scratch the no wax finishes away, and one dropped skillet may ruin an entire floor. Consider a semi-commercial 12" square, dry back tile, one that shows the pattern all the way through the material. If a piece is ruined for some reason, a common iron or hair dryer may be used to heat the defective piece so that it can be removed or replaced with little effort.

Wallpapers, ceramic tiles, and paints with vivid colors and artistic patterns should not be chosen from a small 2" swatch or chip. Get as large a sample as possible. Mix and match is okay. Get opinions from loved ones and consider them with an open mind, requesting reasons for selection from each person.

Then there is placement of the electrical outlets. All should be ground fault outlets, as required by the Wisconsin Uniform Dwelling Code. Make sure that enough are placed at all work stations as per code requirements, as well as lending consideration to the portable appliances that you use everyday. Along with that, proper lighting is equally important at each of the work stations, if for no other reason than to make unpleasant tasks, such as dishes, go faster. Cooking in shadows or inadequate lighting dulls the senses, such as taste. It also affects attitudes, desires, and creativity.

Preliminary planning for kitchen projects can be fun. Involve your entire family and even bring about friendly competition. After you get your sketch down on paper, you can call in a professional remodeler to refine your ideas and make sure that your plans meet all code requirements. No one knows your needs better than you! And even you may be surprised how those change once you put them on paper.

---

We hope this information has been helpful to you! If you have any further questions, please visit our website at [www.aroundyourhouse.net](http://www.aroundyourhouse.net), or contact Jim at Around Your House.

Phone (414) 546-0814  
Fax (414) 546-3240  
Email: [jim@aroundyourhouse.net](mailto:jim@aroundyourhouse.net)

Copyright 2003 Around Your House  
All Rights Reserved