



Cooking Up Kitchen Efficiency

Spring has arrived and inevitably your spring cleaning will take you to the kitchen. With all of the clutter from pots and pans, utensils and food, your countertops and pantries can get messy in a hurry. While organization is key to making your kitchen more efficient, you might look for some green alternatives to introduce to your home to cut down on energy costs too. Take your spring cleaning to the next level this season by remodeling your kitchen to maximize the space to its full potential.

As a general rule of thumb for remodeling your kitchen, think of the area in sections. A kitchen breaks down into four main sections: the storage area, cleaning or sink area, cooking area, and serving area. For your storage area, make sure you have ample room to unload your materials and that everything has a proper space, like a spice rack, cabinet, or pantry. When it comes to the cleaning area, space is key again. You'll need room to clean up after cooking and for unloading a dishwasher full of clean dishes and utensils. In your cooking section you'll need plenty of space to prepare food, but you don't want things too spread out. "A good cook should have everything within arm's reach," says Mari-ette Barsorum of Divine Kitchens in Westboro. Last but not least, the serving area can function as a space in itself or include some other areas, such as the cooking area. A kitchen island is a great way to maximize the space of your kitchen while keeping things organized and within reach. A versatile piece, the kitchen island provides a space used both for food preparation and as a

serving area. A kitchen island can also house a small fridge or cabinetry for further organization.

When it comes to budgeting for kitchen renovations, many improvements don't come cheap. "You have to figure out the investment you are willing and able to put into it," Barsorum says. "A good designer figures out the homeowner's budget and gives them options based on this figure." Countertop choices, for instance, can grow pricey in a hurry. Generally, granite is priced at \$85 per square foot though actual costs depend on the size of the project and quality of the materials. Other than granite, countertops use a variety of exotic colors and stones as well as newer eco-friendly innovations such as recycled glass or ice stone, a combination of concrete and glass.

Keeping in mind our goal to maximize efficiency and space, cabinetry can create a great deal of organization without introducing a heller-skeller design. "People want simple material and design to feel more relaxed," says Barsorum. Flat wood cabinet doors with white, off-white, and neutral New England colors help make a sleek and clean looking kitchen. To modernize the look, try incorporating polished hardware or adding a backsplash of a more vibrant color.

A simple redesign can make your kitchen more efficient, specially, but what about making it more energy efficient? With people looking to reduce their carbon foot print and cut down on energy costs the green movement has grown more popular than ever. New energy-efficient

appliances on the market like steam ovens by Gaggenau or high-efficiency refrigerators can be seen at the showroom at Divine Kitchens in Westborough, but Barsorum recommends focusing on smaller changes to save on energy. "Think of 'reduce, reuse, recycle,'" she explains. "Really, it all comes down to the small things that make a difference." Double-paned windows, for instance, insulate and prevent the loss of heat from the house. Some may think that adding more windows will bring in natural lighting, but Barsorum recommends LED lighting when possible. More windows do not necessarily guarantee more light, but energy-efficient LED fixtures lower costs and improve light quality drastically. You can extend water conservation too by adding a tankless water heater, which heats the water only when in use rather than using energy to keep a full tank warm around the clock.

Most importantly, you want to feel comfortable in your kitchen design. "People are really looking for cozy spaces, or for better ways to utilize and reuse the space they have through redesign. People want to be more simplistic, and make their lives simple and just enjoy their home and families," states Barsorum. This spring, think about how you can update your kitchen so you can enjoy life and your guests more. Whether you cook a lot or a little, the kitchen is a central gathering place, and you want it to be an inviting place that reflects your personality and individual needs.

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