



MULTITASKING MAGICIANS

CHALLENGE: Designing a large kitchen to outfit multiple work zones, and a smorgasbord of new kitchen activities

If you are lucky enough to have a large kitchen or are building an addition onto your house, capitalize on its size by making it into a five-star room that carves out distinct work areas for food prep, clean up, and eating—each with vital bells and whistles.

One of the main secrets to a well-orchestrated, busy kitchen is that people don't get in each other's way; someone who wants to pull ingredients from the refrigerator doesn't bump into another who's moving between the prep counter and range to stir dinner ingredients. This doesn't mean ignoring the traditional

work triangle, defined by the location of the main sink, range, and refrigerator/freezer. Rather, it arranges equipment, countertop space, and storage in separate work zones. This may mean installing two wall ovens in different places, as opposed to stacking them in a traditional way, for different types of cooking, splitting the refrigerator and freezer into two units to allow for more space in each, or adding an additional sink for specific tasks along with a second dishwasher for party cleanup.

Top: Designer Jennifer Gilmer designs a column for wine storage and adjacent open shelves to display collectibles. **Opposite:** In the same kitchen, custom natural cherry millwork unifies a kitchen, family room, and desk area. Wrapping the family room beam and columns and running multi-piece crown molding in both rooms make the space feel cohesive.







Let's Prepare

Consider a designated prep area where food is washed, cut, measured, and mixed. It should be near a refrigerator, sink, and supplies frequently used, and, if possible, be near a dishwasher or close or adjacent to a cooking center. This is where the cooktop or range is the centerpiece with ample counter space on one or both sides and within reach of storage for pots, pans, utensils, oven mitts, water tap, and safety equipment like a first aid kit and fire extinguisher. If you love to bake from scratch, a baking center might be an additional hub within this zone. Have frequently used ingredients stored near the range along with easy access to utensils, a marble slab for rolling out or kneading dough, and cabinetry with slots for baking trays and cupcake pans. And remember to install a powerful hood, especially if you have a grill.

In some kitchens, there's enough room in square footage and the budget to have multiple ovens, sinks, work counters, beverage centers, and still have room for plenty of storage.

Opposite top: Raising the bar counter a few inches helps hide clutter on the sink side from the family room.

Opposite bottom: Adding cubbies for wine makes use of a space under the countertop. **Left:** Extending the countertop behind the faucet gives generous room for food prep.

The cooktop has counter space and shelves on both sides. Separating the oven and cooktop eases traffic jams when multiple cooks get going. Designs: Jennifer Gilmer



Let's Eat

An eating station, which can be an island or peninsula, a freestanding table and chairs, a wall-mounted table that folds down when not in use, or a built-in banquette, should be close to silverware, glassware, linens, and condiments and, if possible, positioned within view of other work zones.

Top: Designer Wendy Johnson of Designs for Living gives new meaning to the term multitasking with a serious work space for baking and an area to serve drinks complete with a desk, bar with LED lighting that changes color; huge TV, wine storage, and coffee center. **Right:** Designer Lori Carroll of Lori Carroll and Associates makes the view the star in this large kitchen where there's ample counter space for working and setting out food, a rounded built-in table for eating, good equipment, cabinetry, and artificial lights for when the sun goes down.





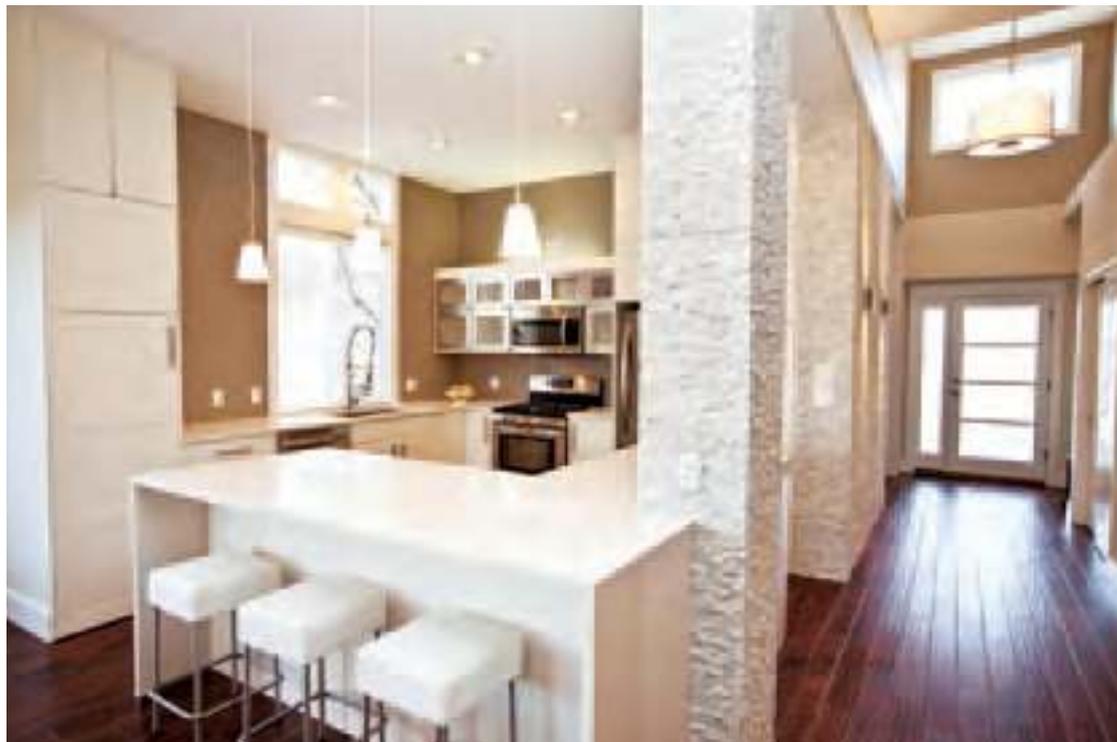




Let's Clean Up

When planning a clean-up center, consider its proximity to storage for items used in the other work centers with a place for dishwasher soap and towels, with counter space to stack and dry dirty dishes and pans.

Opposite and top: Decorating Den Interiors' designer Sandy Kozar's own kitchen opens to a dining room with a big island for entertaining, casual eating, and cleaning up. **Left:** The space includes a coffee center; which designer Kozar built in, along with the adjacent built-in refrigerator/freezer.



Let's Work and Play

If you have enough space, other work zones might include a bill-paying station with counter space that's rarely used for food preparation, or even a built-in desk, though these are losing popularity as computers get smaller and wireless connectivity is ubiquitous. Also, consider a

snack area with an accessible beverage center, mail station where portable electronics can be charged, or a seating area that may be a separate but open room with a change in height to define each. Easy access to the outdoors can open up a room and make it seem larger when weather's good.

Top: Even when small, a kitchen can function in multiple ways, as designer Joe Human of Designs by Human did in reconfiguring this layout. He opened the living and dining rooms to each other and to the kitchen. There's a tight triangle arrangement for preparations and a comfy counter for eating. **Opposite:** In a striking black and white kitchen, Katherine Shenaman of Katherine Shenaman Interiors designed a big island to accommodate every chef's personal work need, while still being inviting for sitting and eating.



Caveat

The non-cooking and clean-up stations should ideally be away from cooking spills, heat, and splashing water. Fortunately, because of better technology in products today, there's usually no longer much heat around ranges and ovens. If room in the kitchen allows, designer Jennifer Gilmer likes to have a separate island for clean-up, which is close to the dining room or has a breakfast bar attached to it. If the space doesn't permit for this kind of luxury, putting a prep sink between the refrigerator about 24 to 36 inches (61 to 91 centimeters) from the cooking surface keeps either in an L- or U-shape or in a straight line that keeps cooking contained along this counter area. Then, the clean-up sink can be on the main island, again near the dining areas.





Because today's kitchen is used for more than just preparing meals and cleaning up, choose materials that dazzle and withstand hard wear and tear. Take into account that these multitasking magicians require a good dose of visual balance. Too much cabinetry, while functional, can make a room look claustrophobic and small, so keep some shelves open or floating, don't run them always to the top of the ceiling, and don't use only dark heavy woods or too much reflective surface. The same goes for expanses of flooring and yards of countertops; break them up perhaps with an area rug or different color or pattern, or different backsplash. Add in enough lighting, and different kinds, to perform all desired tasks, and keep the room light by day and night; lighting technology today even allows you to illuminate areas at different levels

and in different colors. Dimmers allow you to vary illumination in one area too—softer, even romantic—over the table, brighter by the range. Think about wiring the room if you love music.

In one kitchen Gilmer designed in a Colonial-style house (above and left), she changed the finish on the wood for the island, added in a harlequin-shaped tile backsplash, and painted some of the walls an aged ochre color. She unified the space with big dollops of white in perimeter cabinets, white on the ceiling, and a travertine tile floor installed on the diagonal.

If your kitchen can accommodate all the activities above, it will truly be the hub of your home. Other rooms in the house become almost superfluous!

Opposite: Breaking up cabinetry with open shelves above the microwave and flanking them with glass doors keeps this wall light looking in this Gilmer-designed kitchen. Dark wood base cabinets on the island are finished with turned furniture-style legs. **Top left:** In this multitasking kitchen by Gilmer; a second island separates a kitchen and family room, which houses a wine refrigerator and wall oven. **Top center:** A custom range hood surround breaks up wall cabinets on the range wall. **Top right:** A walnut countertop on the island that separates the family room is illuminated by a pendant that matches the pair over the sink island.