



Your Home

Designing for the heart of the home

By Gina Viscusi Elson

Tis the season when we put our kitchens to maximum use, whether it's baking those once-a-year homemade cookies, cooking special family feasts or letting the catering company prepare a holiday party. If your kitchen isn't functioning properly, it will become very apparent during this busy time of year. The art of designing a fully operational kitchen is to start with the way you live.

A great kitchen should be able to grow and change with its family. It should encourage a family to participate in the preparation of meals, giving each member a place to work, stand or sit safely. A great kitchen allows for more than cooking to occur. It has inviting spaces for cookie making and can be used as homework central or the place for wrapping presents and more. Following are a few creative solutions that can make your kitchen the chic center of your happy home.

The new breakfast nook

If space allows, create a table-height seating area in your kitchen. My favorite way to do this is to attach it to the center-island prep area. Children of all ages, including teenagers, can do their homework or pursue their hobbies here while visiting with

INTERIOR IDEAS



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There are many ways to add personality to your kitchen. Try café touches with bold color and open shelving.

the chef. It's a great space for baking, family meals (no need for a separate table), gift-wrapping and buffets.

Family planning center and drop zone

Make space for a family

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Designer Gina Viscusi Elson likes to create a table-height seating area attached to the center island for family meals, homework and hobbies.

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planning center with a large calendar and in/out slots for each family member. Create a file drawer with sections for school and family activities, field-trip forms, college applications – the things you need to access often.

Designate a zone that allows everyone to drop off purses, backpacks, laptops, iPods, phones, keys, wallets and other junk so it won't become horizontal clutter. Make sure there are plenty of electrical outlets for recharging electronics. If there's one place to stop, drop and go,

your family will never misplace anything again (or is that wishful thinking?).

Takeout drawer

If your family is always eating on the go or in need of a quick meal (and whose family isn't?), dedicate a drawer or make space for a binder for your favorite takeout menus. This is essential for my busy family – we all have access to the information and can help make dinner our way – by placing a call.

'Just for you' drawer

When I design for a family with young children, I make sure

the children have areas in the kitchen that are safe for them. I designate drawers where they can grab their own cups and bowls, art supplies or toys, allowing them independence. These drawers can grow as the children grow and eventually become receptacles for homework items, games or snacks.

Specialty cabinetry

Cabinetry is one of the most important and expensive purchases for your kitchen. This is where you want to invest in quality and work with a professional who can

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guide you through the process. I come up with all kinds of storage ideas for my clients and look to a talented cabinetmaker to turn those brainstormers into functioning cabinetry.

Some of my clients favor floating shelves for open storage, furniture-style cabinetry, refrigerators styled as armoires, tilt-up doors and decorative toe cutouts. Popular functions include composting drawers, recycle centers, narrow pullout towers for cooking sauces, oils

and spices, knife drawers, pull-out towel bars, glass-lid storage and divided drawers for a variety of storage needs.

Adding personality

Choose appliances that fit your lifestyle. Add specialty pieces you will use rather than the latest trend. Add a dish drawer if you need more washing capacity, a coffee center if a “no whip, grande nonfat mocha” is a morning favorite, crisper drawers for snacks or soda addicts and a new speed oven if you would like to speed things up a bit.

Add further personality through color, artwork, rugs and decorative lighting. Try putting inspirational sayings on the walls and a chalkboard for a more traditional form of text messaging. Pull in texture and pattern through your window coverings and seating fabrics.

Through some forethought, careful planning and a bit of creativity, you can create a kitchen that feeds your family’s soul.

Gina Viscusi Elson owns Viscusi Elson Interior Design, 382 First St. in Los Altos. For more information, visit www.VEinteriordesign.com.