



Feature Story
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Put the Fun in Function

-Making the Most of Kitchen Storage-

If cooking is a hassle for you, it may be time to do some reorganizing. **Curtis Stone**, renowned chef star of the reality cooking show “Take Home Chef,” thinks that a beautiful, well-organized kitchen can make a world of difference to home cooks.

“When I was doing ‘Take Home Chef’ and cooking in all these different houses,” says Stone, “I was thinking, why is it so difficult to cook in people’s homes? It was so easy in a professional kitchen! Well, one of the main differences between a professional kitchen and residential kitchen is organization. But with the right organizational features, **cooking can be fun and relaxing.**”

Get in the Zone

According to Paul Radoy, manager of design services for Merillat, the best way to approach kitchen organization and storage is to look at the room in sections. “All kitchens have a **cooking zone** and a cleanup zone,” he says. “And some kitchens may have an island or pantry. Each of these areas lends themselves to various storage opportunities.”

The Cooking Zone

Food preparation and cooking are the primary functions of a kitchen, which is why keeping cooking items organized and within easy reach is key.

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The National Association of Professional Organizers recommends observing the flow of activity in your kitchen and organizing around it. Stone agrees, saying, "I believe the kitchen should be designed for the way you live."

Whether you're installing new cabinets or working with your existing units, try to optimize your space by creating specified storage areas.

- Group objects by purpose and dedicate specific storage areas for them. Having all the bakeware together or all the pots and pans together lets you get to what you need quickly and efficiently.
- Store pots and pans as close to the stove as possible.
- Keep utensils where you can reach them easily while cooking. A utensil hanging system on the backsplash, or a pull-down knife rack under the wall cabinet next to the cooktop keeps you from digging through drawers.

"Now I know almost everyone as a pots and pans cabinet, and most of them are a mess," says Stone. "Well, Merillat has come up with an ingenious solution. Peg dividers for drawers can be customized to neatly fit all your pots and pans as you like them. It's not one-size-fits-all, so it can be nicely organized."

Awkward items can be stored on a lazy Susan or a swing-out base cabinet, both of which take advantage of a tricky blind corner situation. The swing-out base cabinet allows full access to the entire cabinet with its two adjustable roll-out trays.

The Pantry Zone

If you're tired of hunting through a dozen canned goods to find the one you really need, or if you end up buying items you didn't know you already had, then it's time to reorganize the pantry.

Group similar food items together, the way you see them on grocery store shelves. Keep canned goods on one shelf, breakfast foods on another, baking ingredients on another. If you don't have a lot of built-in storage space, look for ways to maximize what you do have.

- Individual turntables are great for organizing and storing spices and smaller pantry items. They can be put inside cabinets or on your counter to give you easy access.
- Stacking platforms can go in taller shelf spaces to eliminate wasted space.
- Pullout shelves or baskets can utilize even more space in a cupboard.

The Clean-Up Zone

Stone says that organizing the **cleanup zone** can minimize clutter and make cleanup easier. From the location of the sink and dishwasher to various organizational accessories, any cleanup zone can shine.

Things like a tilt-out sink tray, which keeps soaps and sponges out of sight, an under sink tote and a base waste basket help keep things well organized. Also, a cutting board kit close to the sink makes for easy cleanup during food prep.

“From a chef’s perspective, and from a home cook’s perspective,” says Stone, “when you’re working in a kitchen that makes sense, it makes the whole cooking experience much easier – and more fun.”

For more on the latest kitchen storage solutions, visit Merillat.com.

Sidebar

More Organizing Tips

- *Get rid of what you don’t use.* If you haven’t used the waffle maker or Panini press in recent memory, it’s time to let them go. If they’re in working order, give them to someone who will use them, or donate them to a thrift store.
- *Store Seasonal items.* Make room for your everyday items by storing those holiday plates and the oversized soup tureen outside the kitchen. Label the boxes or storage containers so you can find them when you need them.
- *Don’t forget about the freezer.* Use dividers or baskets to help you create designated sections in the freezer. That way, you don’t have to dig around for what you need.
- *Look for unused or underused spaces.* Look at all areas, including above and below appliances and behind doors. Unused floor space could be maximized with a kitchen island that adds additional storage.

About Merillat. *Based in Adrian, Michigan, and part of Masco Cabinetry, the Merillat® brand has been providing quality cabinetry since 1946. With manufacturing plants located throughout the United States, Merillat has grown to become one of the nation’s largest cabinet manufacturers and the number one builder preferred cabinetry brand. Merillat offers the best selection of stylish, quality products at a variety of price levels, and all Merillat products carry the seal of the Kitchen Cabinet Manufacturer Association (KCMA). Merillat is leading the industry in consumer research to better understand what new home shoppers are looking for when purchasing a home. Merillat is proud to be a Diamond Sponsor of the National Association of Home Builders, Professional Women in Building, a member of the NAHB National Council of the Housing Industry, Color Marketing Institute and the National Kitchen and Bath Association. A leader in environmental stewardship, Masco Cabinetry has been certified ISO 14001 and granted an Environmental Stewardship Program certificate by the KCMA. www.merillat.com*