


How to Lay Out a Small Kitchen

If you're short on cooking space but have big ideas, look no further – our experts will make your small kitchen sing

 **Kate Burt** 24 December, 2022
Houzz UK. I'm a journalist and editor, previously for the Independent, Guardian and va... More

 Save

 Comment 12

 Like 30

 Share

“Kitchens are increasingly the heart of the social space in a home,” architect Charlie Butterwick says. “Making a small kitchen that can flex to accommodate daily family life as well as entertaining, where people can remain involved and connected but not get in the way, is quite a challenge and requires innovative thinking.”

The trickier the space, the more it pays to hire a professional designer, who will be able to ensure it has good flow, function and aesthetics – all tailored to your needs and tastes. Here are some expert pointers to get you on the right track if you have a pocket-sized kitchen in need of improvement.

Professional advice from: Ellen Sacks-Jones of Matthew Giles Architects; Nicola Buxton of HUX London; Charlie Butterwick of Architecture Unknown




1. Preserve some empty space


It may seem counterintuitive not to make practical use of every available space in a tiny kitchen, but packing too much in can create new issues.

For example, Ellen Sacks-Jones says, “It can be tempting to fill every last inch with cupboards, but, while this may provide lots of storage, it can make small spaces feel cramped.”

Sponsored


Sponsored


**PEAKE Projects London Ltd**
★★★★★ 18 Reviews


**Armstrong Simmonds Architects**
★★★★★ 13 Reviews


South London Specialists in Creative Design and Build Projects
South West London Full Service Architectural Practice


People who liked this story also liked


- 


The 10 Most Popular Kitchens Around the World in 2022 Full Story >
- 

How to Choose Kitchen Appliances Full Story >
- 

How to Choose a Kitchen Designer Full Story >
- 

How to Achieve a Stress-free Kitchen Renovation Full Story >
- 

Should I Ditch My Kitchen Wall Units? Full Story >
- 

How to Illuminate Your Kitchen Without Relying on Downlights Full Story >
- 

8 Steps to Surviving a Kitchen Redesign Full Story >



How to Design an Open-plan Kitchen Layout Full Story >

“Walkway space in small kitchens is also often overlooked,” Nicola Buxton says. “Our clients love to cook with their partners and families, so having enough room to share with someone else around prep space or appliances is important.”

In addition, Nicola adds a more subtle design tip. “In small kitchens, try to avoid using protruding handles, particularly when walkway widths are narrow,” she says. “Instead, consider handleless designs, recessed handles, or integrated finger pulls.”

Ellen also flags up the idea of a mirrored splashback. “It helps to make the whole space feel much bigger,” she says.

More: *10 Essential Kitchen Dimensions You Need to Know*



2. Rethink the triangle

Traditionally, kitchen design follows a triangle between the sink, fridge, and oven or hob. “We find this still often happens naturally in large kitchens,” Nicola says, “but small kitchens can fall victim to poor layouts and then lack flow.

“We like to create zones, such as grouping the sink, dishwasher and bin together, which helps movement around the kitchen,” she continues. “If space is lacking, it’s important to think about how you’ll use what room you do have. Creating zones for cooking, preparatory work and cleaning will help as a starting point to decide on a kitchen layout and will make the space more efficient.”

More: *How to Zone a Kitchen Beyond the Usual Triangle*



3. Minimise to fit more in

“This may sound obvious, but consider the size of the units,” Ellen says. “Do they all need to be the standard depth, or could you have shallower ones in places?”

Pointing to the kitchen pictured here, which she designed for a garden room and where the units along the back wall are only 30cm deep, Ellen says, “This provides storage space, but obviously



Sponsored
20 Beautifully Styled
Worktops Full Story >

16 Farmhouse Kitchens That
Feel Cosy and
Inviting Full Story >



PEAKE Projects London Ltd
★★★★★ 18 Reviews

South London Specialists in Creative
Design and Build Projects





takes up less room than standard-depth kitchen units.”

She also suggests appliance sizes should be considered. “Could these be compact versions – for example, a small sink and a three-quarter-size dishwasher?” she says. The space pictured has a small sink, a half-size oven, a two-ring hob, and, under the island, a compact dishwasher and fridge.

Is your small space ready for an update? Find reviewed kitchen designers near you on Houzz.



Active Builders London Ltd

Sponsored



PEAKE Projects London Ltd
★★★★★ 18 Reviews

South London Specialists in Creative
Design and Build Projects

4. Make it personal

That beautiful kitchen you’ve seen online may have some great ideas for your own design, but copying it slavishly is risky, Charlie Butterwick believes. “Each kitchen should be designed around the occupant’s real-life needs,” he says. “We often see social media-led inspirations being brought forward that are both very specific and not suited to the owner’s actual style of using the room.”

This is especially important when space is tight and a small wrong move can make a huge difference to functionality. “By the same token,” Charlie adds, “deciding with your designer how you’d like to use your kitchen differently is essential and can often lead to efficiencies where old, unloved appliances are donated to charity and not replaced.”



John Lewis of Hungerford

5. Maximise corners from floor to ceiling

We’re all familiar with pull-out corner units in base cabinets, but try maximising wall cupboards, too. “Wall cabinets can extend into corners and the space below could be used for a coffee nook or to hide a food processor,” Nicola says.

“Often, a kitchen may lack floor area but make up for it by having a high ceiling,” she continues. “So thinking vertically is a smart way to gain storage space rather than relying on base cabinets



How to Lay Out a Small Kitchen | Houzz UK
relying on base cabinets. Fitting joinery from floor to ceiling and in available corners allows you to make every inch count.”



6. Get flexible

In a small kitchen, the option to use one item or area for more than one purpose can buy you bags more space.

“Could you use a dining table as an additional worktop – or an island as a principal dining space?” Ellen asks. “Would you consider an electric or induction hob, so this space could also be used as a worktop when not in use? Is there any high-level space that could be used for additional storage?”



7. Assess your appliances

“In small kitchens, it’s smart to consider integrated appliances to maintain a clean look,” Nicola says.

“Think, too, about multipurpose appliances, such as boiling-water taps, microwave combination ovens, and hobs with downdraft extractors,” she says. “These will keep your worktops clear of freestanding appliances and your wall cabinets free from an extraction unit.”

Sponsored



PEAKE Projects London Ltd
★★★★★ 18 Reviews

South London Specialists in Creative Design and Build Projects





8. Let there be light

Ellen suggests thinking about where natural light is coming from and how to maximise it. “For example, perhaps don’t crowd window areas with wall units, which can block light,” she says.

Nicola agrees that planning kitchen layouts around windows can help to let light into the space and make it seem bigger. But it’s not just about natural light. “Small spaces are often thought of as dark so, to prevent this, install LED strips or downlights to open shelving and high units,” she says. “This is a helpful tool in small kitchens to make the space feel brighter and more open, as well as providing task lighting for food prep.”

Ellen adds that the choice of materials and colours can also impact light and the sense of spaciousness. “Often, lighter colours work better at high level, and if darker colours are going to be introduced, perhaps this is below worktop level.”



9. Look for nooks

Seating can also be tricky in a small layout. “In larger kitchens, people use islands for informal seating, whereas in smaller kitchens this may not be possible and it can be difficult to find space to sit,” Nicola says. She adds that banquette seating can be a good solution, meaning a designer can make use of a corner or bay window.

Tell us...

Do you have, or have you ever had, a small kitchen? What did you learn about laying out a compact space from living with it? Share your tips in the Comments.

Sponsored



PEAKE Projects London Ltd
★★★★★ 18 Reviews

South London Specialists in Creative
Design and Build Projects

