smaller spaces

Making Smaller Spaces Appear Larger





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Kitchens are not as large as they once were. The kitchen and home footprint are contracting as a rule and open floor plans are becoming the norm. A downside to open floor plan kitchens, is a lost wall of cabinets, which can make it more of a challenge to provide ample storage.

When space is an issue, our first thoughts are to ensure that the finished project is both functional and aesthetically wowing. For functionality, we envision an imaginary straight line drawn from the center of the sink, to the center of the cooktop, to the center of the refrigerator and finally back to the sink. In the trade, this is referred to as the work triangle. As a rule of thumb, no leg of the triangle should be less than 4 feet or more than 9 feet from one another. Concurrent in configuring the best triangle, we also address storage solutions.

Islands are enormously popular, but they are not always the best solution, especially if space is limited, because they can make it difficult to maneuver in the room. Alternatives to islands include u-shaped designs or peninsulas to provide both storage and countertop space. Using multitasking principles and products help to maximize the effectiveness of the kitchen when space is at a premium. This can be accomplished by:

- Keeping countertops at seat height instead of bar stool height, which enables the countertop to serve dual purposes of a dining area and work area
- Specifying appliances that serve dual roles such as refrigerators that have the ability to convert between fridge and freezer or combination ovens that can function as a convection, conventional and speed ovens
- Creating bar areas that can be used for organization and entertaining
- Specifying multifunctional islands that serve as dining and work areas
- Installing pullout pantries or cabinets that serve as pantries
- Using nonstandard sized cabinets
- Extending cabinets to the ceiling and countertops
- Hanging pot racks from the ceiling
- Taking advantage of in-cabinet storage solutions such as vertical tray dividers, roll out shelves and trays
- Specifying smaller or alternative appliances, e.g., columnar refrigerators or a speed oven in lieu of microwave
- Specifying base cabinets that are 15-inches deep instead of the standard 24 inches. This provides for more floor space and doesn't compromise storage significantly because it only eliminates areas that are otherwise difficult to reach.

Here are some other cabinet ideas:

- Cabinets with touch-activated latches eliminate the need for pulls or knobs and create clean lines that make the space appear larger.
- Mix upper cabinets with open shelving to create a more open feel.
- Use glass doors to make upper cabinets appear brighter without compromising storage.
- Install lighting over, under and inside of cabinets to add brightness to the room and help eliminate dark shadows that give the impression that the room is shrinking.
- Paint cabinets the same color as the walls, which reduces contrast thereby making the room look and feel less cluttered and larger than it really is.
- Specify white cabinets because white reflects more light opening the room and eliminating the feeling that the space is closed.

For a backsplash in a smaller area, consider a mirrored or reflective stainless steel that acts as a mirror. It will make the room appear to be much larger. Using a short backsplash that matches the wall color helps to eliminate the distinction between where the backsplash ends and the wall begins, which makes the wall look taller.

The type of sink also affects the look and feel of a new kitchen. We recently specified a single bowl sink placed in a 24-inch cabinet instead of the standard 30-inch sink, and that freed up six inches of counter space on each side of the sink. If you have a smaller kitchen consider reducing the size of your sink and use the space for other more useful purposes.

When it comes to appliance selection for smaller spaces:

- Consider an 18-inch dishwasher instead of a standard-size 24-inch. This will allow for larger cabinets in other parts of your kitchen.
- Consider a 30-inch refrigerator instead of a standard 36-inch model.
- Panels on the fridge and dishwasher provide a sophisticated and airy look.
- Picking a beautiful range hood can eliminate the need to use cabinetry to hide the ductwork.

Select lighter colors especially on countertops, backsplashes, walls and millwork. Using lighter colors will make a smaller kitchen feel more open. If the kitchen has windows that look out into a garden or outdoor space, try to incorporate the colors you see outside into the palate you select for the floor, walls and countertops.

If there is little to no natural light, we often specify mirrored tile backsplashes or select a mirror for over the stove. Using mirrored surfaces helps to open spaces and bound light around. Mirrors often provide a more interesting and open visual than a plain wall.





Open shelves are not only an exceptionally functional and utilitarian storage option, they also help to keep the space light and airy. They work particularly well in kitchens with celings that are ten foot or higher.

Don't forget about the floor. Too often floors are an afterthought or not given their proper due. Floors offer another opportunity for you to make a unique design statement. A patterned floor gives the impression of a great expanse. Your options are almost limitless, ranging from wood floor patterns to hand-painted tiles. Conversely, avoid striped flooring that runs side to side. Instead, run your flooring from end to end to help create the impression that you are stretching floor space.

Light right! There is no such thing as an over lit kitchen. LED technology is changing the lighting game for the better in ceiling, under cabinet, in cabinet, in drawer, recessed, pendants and about any other fixture you can imagine. Lighting is not where you want to cut back as it can make smaller spaces appear much larger.

Other Strategies

- Pick pieces with a smaller footprint such as slender chairs, thin stools and narrow tables. The key is to avoid furnishings that are bulky.
- Avoid ornate designs and objects.
- If possible create additional storage space by recessing shelves in a pantry into the wall between studs.
- Open the room up by taking down non-load bearing walls.
- Have clutter free countertops and work surfaces.
- Select a sleek vent hood.
- Maximize gap space that otherwise may be covered with a filler board to install pull-out storage, pull out wine coolers, pool out spice racks, etc.
- Call us at 508-295-1311 or visit our showroom at 3127 Cranberry Highway, East Wareham, MA to discuss how you can maximize the look, feel and functionality of your kitchen.

