

Decluttering the Kitchen

Free up your counters, cupboards and shelves from the clutter that fills them with easy and effective tips and rules for decluttering the kitchen.

Excerpted from *Houseworks*, by Cynthia Townley Ewer



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It's not raindrops that keep falling on your head; it's the plastic tumblers when you open the cupboard. Time to declutter the kitchen!

Before you begin, clear counters, empty the dishwasher and bring your kitchen to an ordinary state of clean. Fill a dishpan or sink with hot soapy water for quick cleanup and replacement of dusty items. Now begin, taking one step (drawer, cupboard, or shelf) at a time.

Decisions, Decisions!

With each item you encounter you'll have to decide: Keep, sell or donate, store, put away or toss? Bust the decision-making dam by holding each one in your hand and asking yourself a single question: "When have I last used it?"

"Never!" Out it goes, to the trash or for donation or to a yard sale — allow some other family the consumer thrill of possessing that genuine as-advertised-on-TV potato peeler machine.

“Within the last year.” Out it goes, with one exception. Seasonal cooking tools used only once a year, such as specialty cookie presses, may be given house room if and only if they are removed from active kitchen storage and placed with the holiday decorations in a box marked Holiday Cooking Tools.

“Within the last month.” Candidate for a keeper. Deciding where the item should live will come during the organizing phase of the kitchen cleanup.

“Yesterday!” Watch for these items; they’re the backbone of an organized kitchen. Keep. Clean them if necessary and put them away where you found them. They will be the star performers of your new, improved kitchen.

Stop Clutter in the Kitchen

Label three STOP clutter boxes as follows: Put Away, Sell/Donate and Storage. Also add a fourth box, labeled Put Away (kitchen). You’ll use this for items that belong in another location in the kitchen, the first Put Away box for strays from other areas of the house. Add garbage bags and set the timer to 20 minutes. Ready?

1. Sort

The sorting step is a powerhouse, designed to force a decision. Is this item trash? Into the garbage bag it goes. Does it belong elsewhere in the kitchen or in another room? Consign it to the correct Put Away box. Can it be donated or sold? Into the Sell/ Donate box. Is it a specialty or seasonal item that should be stored? Place in the Storage box. Sort until you empty the space or the timer rings, whichever comes first.

2. Toss

Finished sorting? Toss the trash. No pity, no mercy, no second chances! If you don’t use it, it has no place in a lean, mean kitchen.

3. Organize

Assess the newly cleared space, wiping it free from dust or crumbs. Replace shelf liner if needed, or unroll nonskid padding to cushion kitchen dishes or glassware. Next, check the hardy survivors. Dusty or dirty items get a quick wash before being returned to their bright new home.

4. Put away

Check both Put Away boxes and return the items inside to their proper places. Take the Storage and Sell/Donate boxes to storage areas. Stow your declutter tools until the next session. Done!

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