

Think Outside the Triangle

From work zones to Feng Shui, our experts weigh in on the latest trends in kitchen design.

By Abigail R. Esman



From Triangle To Zones

The work triangle has inspired kitchen design since the 1940s. Placing the sink, stove and refrigerator at opposite points saved on building materials and allowed the cook to move from storage and cleaning to cooking with a simple step-and-turn. As kitchens have evolved into multipurpose rooms, says Lee Stahl, a New York-based designer and owner of The Renovated Home, the kitchen triangle has given way to zones, where family members can work without bashing elbows.

Jeff Schwartz of Newton, Mass.-based J. Schwartz Design says that changing cabinet styles has encouraged the shift. "With the movement toward less uniform cabinetry and a more freestanding furniture feel," he says, "there is the opportunity for discrete separate zones for prep and cooking, baking and cleanup."

Doubling Up - Or Separating

The kitchen triangle was built around the single cook, but families are more likely to share the load now. Setting up kitchen zones gives everyone a task and space to do it. For example, Jeff often creates a two-sink arrangement for his clients: one for prep and one for cleanup.

In a growing trend, homeowners are installing multiple refrigerators: the traditional standup model and one in a bar or island. Hosts can chat to their guests while mixing a drink or the kids can grab an apple without getting underfoot.

Separating the cooktop and the oven is another option Jeff recommends. Since most people don't bake as often as they use the cooktop, getting the oven out of the way (mounted under the counter) makes smart use of space.

Small-Space Configurations

Jeff also offers a variety of inspiring options for nontriangular kitchen zoning in smaller spaces. "A galley works great," he says, "even if only on one wall. The opposite wall can be open to an adjacent living or dining space, or be set up as floor-to-ceiling storage or casual dining space. At each end of the galley, you could have large openings or glass partitions opening up to views, artwork, other living areas or the outdoors: a look that works well with contemporary cabinetry and finishes, or with a mid-century modern aesthetic."

A similar option could be the aptly named "efficiency kitchen," with fridge, sink, countertop and stove in sequence. This set-up allows you to use all the kitchen's features while barely moving a single step. Talk about efficient.

Jeff votes against islands that anchor cooktops or sinks. "One mistake we often see - and that we have to undo - are islands that block traffic and functional lanes." However for a galley configuration, a parallel island can be useful for eating, storage and prep.

Promoting Harmony

In some cultures, the kitchen triangle is thought to create imbalance because it places the cook in a vulnerable position. The principles of Feng Shui, for examples, recommend placing the stove in the center of the room.

Mary Mihaly, a certified Feng Shui practitioner based in Cleveland, Ohio, says, "When you stand at the stove, you should be in the 'command position,' which means you can see all entrances and most of the room itself. If it's necessary that the stove be against the wall and the cook's back would be to the room, the cure is to put a mirror or other reflective surface above the stove, so the cook can see the entire room."

Read the full article at <http://www.hgtv.com/kitchens/think-outside-the-triangle/index.html>