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How To Declutter A Kitchen — 8 Easy Ways You Can Tackle Mess Before the Holidays

Curbing clutter in your kitchen has never been easier with these expert-approved tips and tricks

BY CIERA CREE 3 DECEMBER, 2024

1. FIGURE OUT YOUR 'PROBLEM ZONES'

Decluttering is a task that many people find overwhelming, so breaking it down into something more manageable is often a good first step.

Begin by identifying which areas of your kitchen are prone to becoming cluttered and try to figure out why. Is it a place where people often dump their dishes, which leads to an unwanted pile-up? Are appliances on a particular surface never put away and there are no kitchen counter organizers to encourage good tidying practices? If so, then it's probably time to take action.

Heidi Solomon, professional organizer and interior decorator at POSH Boston, says, "As the heart of a home, kitchens are busy spaces, often where we begin and end our days. It's easy for stuff from daily living to land there, especially if we don't have any pre-existing systems in place to prevent that from happening."

Tackling the most cluttered areas first will create the most impact. But if you're someone who struggles to begin decluttering, opting for areas with less clutter might be a good way to get the ball rolling.

The simplehuman stainless steel frame dishrack from Target is spacious and will help give your dirty dishes a home instead of piling up on a kitchen worktop. It even has a section to safely store your stemware.

2. EMPTY EVERYTHING OUT

Now, let's hop into actively decluttering. The best way to begin making a positive change in your cluttered kitchen is to get everything off of your surfaces and out of your cabinets to categorize. If you have lots of stuff you can work area by area, starting with your open spaces like counters and shelves for higher impact, then moving to tucked away items you should get rid of in your kitchen cabinets.

Your kitchen floor is a good candidate as it's spacious and will grant plenty of room to look through what your kitchen actually contains. Putting down a tarp like the budget-friendly all purpose canvas drop cloth from Amazon will keep your items hygienic and safe from potential scratches. If you have a bad back or would prefer to stand up, laying everything out on your dining table will do the trick, too.

"First I would clear off your countertops and kitchen table as much as possible," says Heidi. "Then, remove the contents from each drawer and cabinet. As you remove items, sort them into categories: cooking tools, food items, appliances etc, then create separate piles from these containing what you no longer want and what's to stay in the kitchen."

This approach ensures that you see every item in your kitchen, and though this may be a lot to take in in a cluttered space, it'll give you a true measure of what you have. Kiera Malowitz, certified professional organizer and owner of Decluttered LLC says, "We all have those items that we hardly use or that we have aspirations of using 'one day.' I remember when my husband and I got married, we asked for a fondue set. We had big dreams of having fondue gatherings at our home. Over time we discovered that while we love fondue, we much prefer to go out and enjoy the ambiance at a restaurant than staying in our own home. Think about what you truly enjoy using at home and let go of the rest."

3. DECIDE WHAT TO DECLUTTER

If you're unsure where to start with your kitchen decluttering, there are some easy quick wins that won't leave you feeling decision fatigue. "I recommend checking all expiration dates on food items and assessing your categories for duplicates," says Heidi.

Expired food items can be tossed out, and if you have twenty bowls, the time you've taken to assess your categories has highlighted them as an area to consider cutting down.

Remember these two key things throughout the process: everyone's kitchen is unique, so if your bowl collection brings you joy, you don't have to let some go. And decluttering doesn't necessarily mean that you have to get rid of anything. The items in your kitchen may just be in the wrong places and need putting away to maintain a sense of order.

4. RECALL YOUR RE-PURCHASES

If you bought a new cutting board because your last one was poor quality or damaged, why do you still have the old one? If you bought a new set of plates and have mismatched ones left in the cupboard that you have never reached for, do you really need to keep them?

"Clutter can build up when we upgrade and buy new items but fail to let go of the previous items," says Mindy Godding, certified professional organizer, owner of Abundance Organizing and president of the National Association of Productivity and Organizing Professionals (NAPO).

So if you're wondering where to start when working your way around a cluttered kitchen area, perhaps take some time to recall what you most recently replaced.

5. GIVE ALL ITEMS A HOME OR 'ZONE'

Making sure every item in your kitchen has a home or zone may sound like more of an organizational tip, but it's actually a crucial step in keeping your kitchen decluttered. If an item doesn't have a designated space — including decor for decorating kitchen countertops — it's more likely to be left out, lingering as a piece of clutter. Whereas, if it has a home, you will know where the item is supposed to go and (hopefully) return it there.

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"Ideally, you want to be able to plant your feet and reach anything you would need for a task," says Mindy. "Think through the steps and supplies for simple kitchen tasks — like making a cup of coffee or packing a lunch — and then pull those items together somewhere, whether that's a drawer, shelf, or container. Then you can review duplication and remove items that are unnecessary. Understanding the inventory needed for a task can help us to make better decisions about where to store items and how much is too much. If drawers and cabinets are overloaded, then it becomes hard to put things away. As a result, items can rapidly build up on counters and even floors."

Adding labels on your shelf or containers where items are meant to go will help you get used to your new tidying routine, as well as combat clutter blindness. I like the watercolor canning stickers from Walmart because they're something a little different and decorative, but the avery chalkboard labels are tried and trusted, with the perks of being reusable and removable.

6. PAIR YOUR LIDS AND CONTAINERS

It really hit home when Kiera mentioned the importance of matching food storage containers together with their lids. I swear the lids seem to crawl off somewhere on their own accord to never be seen again, so there are always mismatched pieces left cluttering my kitchen.

"Typically one of the messiest areas of a kitchen is food storage containers. Whether you have plastic or glass or both, somehow those pesky lids go missing!," says Kiera. "It's a great idea to go through these every few months, matching lids to their respective containers and seeing what containment has lost its other half. Then, declutter from there. Also look at what containers you aren't using and if certain sized ones in sets are never reached for."

The Container Store has a vast array of handy kitchen storage pieces available in different materials to help make your pantry so much more functional. The Rubbermaid Brilliance Food Storage Container Set of 36 is the ultimate package deal of storage, giving everything in your kitchen a home. However, if smaller containers in a set tend to go unused in your household, something like the Lustroware Smart Locks Boxes may be more suitable for your needs.

7. MAKE IT FUN

There are many ways you could approach making decluttering fun, but some of my favorites are switching on timers to declutter in bursts, listening to music while making decisions to reduce stress, or calling a friend to declutter with so it feels like we're both decluttering our spaces together.

Linda Samuels, certified professional organizer and founder of Oh, So Organized!, says, "When you're overwhelmed by kitchen clutter, infuse some fun and energy into decluttering your space. Set a timer. Play upbeat music. Grab a large collection container like a laundry basket or box. The goal is to fill the container with items from the counters, surfaces, and floors that *belong elsewhere*. Then, afterwards, bring the things you collected to their homes or choose to let them go. You'll see an immediate reduction in kitchen clutter."

The Althoff Rope Storage Fabric Basket from Wayfair would be ideal for this task as it's got handles to swiftly carry around your space and has lots of room to store things. Their rosecliff heights fabric basket is a good choice as well for if you plan to leave your basket sat down and not bring it around with you. Its circumference is wider, making it useful for carrying larger items.

8. MAINTAIN YOUR DECLUTTERED KITCHEN

Decluttering will be a continuous cycle in your kitchen if you don't maintain the hard work you put in. So to save yourself future stress and labor, make decluttering an ongoing process and part of your kitchen routine.

"Kitchen clutter collects when a process isn't finished," says Linda. "For example, after you open a cabinet or drawer, close it. When you use a pan, wash it and put it away. After cooking a meal with many ingredients, return them to the pantry or refrigerator instead of keeping them out. Completing the cycle is an effective and immediately noticeable decluttering strategy."

Another way to ensure that your kitchen stays clutter-free is to be mindful of new purchases. Before adding items to your cart, take time to decide if they are actually needed in your space. If they're not, wait until you need a replacement.

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Pro-Organizers Share 5 Simple Ways To Conceal Clutter in a Living Room Remove Mess Without the Extra Work!

Expert advice on what you can do to hide away clutter before guests arrive

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1. CHECK TO SEE IF YOU HAVE THE RIGHT FURNITURE

The best way to start concealing clutter in your space is to assess your home's current means of living room storage. It's simple: if you don't have what you need, you won't be able to conceal your items.

Have a look around the space. Are there designated places for your living room items to go that aren't in eyesight, or are at least tucked away in a more visually-appealing place like a chic storage basket? Once you have a better idea of your living area, you can begin to evaluate what works well within your space and seek to fill in any gaps.

Cheryl Arzewski and Jordan Marks, co-owners of It's Organized, LLC, say, "It's important to take some time to determine whether you have the right furniture to hold the items in your living room, to begin with, and to check if you feel you've been optimizing your space for concealing items. Don't forget to use the wall space in your living room, too —it's the perfect place for shelving and a great way to deal with items without cluttering up other surfaces like your mantel."

The Daiden 6 tier wood and metal book shelf with drawers from Wayfair would make a great addition to your living room, offering both open and hidden storage ideas. This way, you can conceal the items you don't want on show and keep displaying what you love.

2. INVEST IN CLOSED STORAGE

The easiest way to conceal clutter and make the most out of a small living room is by adding closed storage. Think about it: when you walk into the space and see cluttered shelves and stacks of toys falling out of their basket — it's not a good look and will ruin your home's overall aesthetic. This is exactly where closed storage mechanisms come in to save the day.

Heidi Solomon, professional organizer and interior decorator at POSH Boston, says, "Having furniture with closed storage such as coffee tables with drawers, blanket boxes and large baskets with lids are all great selections for keeping living room clutter at bay."

There is an abundance of options and styles for closed storage pieces, too, from simplistic to elegant additions that will make your living room storage look more expensive.

The Tegance blanket basket with a lid from Amazon is a minimalistic, versatile piece that can be used to store anything from blankets to toys and games. But if you're looking for something more spacious, we recommend trying out the SONGMICS storage basket with lid, also from Amazon, which holds 42.3 gallons.

3. THINK MULTI-PURPOSE WITH YOUR FURNITURE

Small apartment furniture ideas do not need to be so challenging! Think multi-functional. Furniture that can hide the mess and conceal your clutter. But remember, the choices you make about which storage pieces enter your living room play a big role in the space's ability to adequately store (and conceal) what you have.

"The goal should be to incorporate storage type pieces to conceal as much clutter as possible," say Cheryl and Jordan. Investing in multipurpose pieces such as storage benches and storage ottomans that open up is a great way to do this, as you're gaining hidden storage space inside items that would have been in the space anyway."

For example, your regular bench could be switched out for something like the Orviston button tufted rectangle storage bench from Wayfair, offering seating in your space as well as storage. Wayfair's Noelle upholstered ottoman is another great pick to boost your living room's capacity for hidden storage, and it comes in many colors.

4. USE OPAQUE STORAGE BINS

Storage bins are a long-loved mechanism for keeping items together, preventing clutter in all kinds of spaces. There are loads of different types out there — not just the transparent variety, which isn't the best for concealing your stuff, resulting in a need to learn how to hide storage boxes. So have a browse, and who knows, perhaps you'll find something fabulous.

5. OPT FOR BUILT-IN STORAGE

If you have the budget and don't feel incorporating extra furniture into your living room will work with your floor (and wall) space, built-in storage pieces are an alternative choice for concealing clutter easily.

"If you're trying to conceal clutter in your living room, consider getting built-ins or additional furniture to house items that you want to keep in your living room space," says Jamie. Built-in options include cabinets, sideboards, and more.