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# KITCHEN CUPBOARDS

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UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA  
*Agricultural Extension Service*  
 U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Revised by Lucile Holaday. Original bulletin by Mary May Miller.

# *Kitchen Cupboards*

**T**ODAY'S HOMEMAKER wants order and system in her kitchen cupboards. She wants everything within reach to simplify her job. She wants to avoid needless trips between storage places and to cut the distance between them. But this means that she must have the right amount of work surface and cupboard space at each work center—the mixing, cleaning, and cooking-serving centers.

Each homemaker will have her own ideas for the details of her cupboard arrangement. But regardless, her first steps in improvement will be to weed out all articles she never uses. Then she needs to group together those that she generally uses for the same job, to store small equipment where it is used most frequently, and to place utensils at the center where they are used first. Everything should be so arranged that she need not move or lift dishes or supplies to reach another article.

It is assumed that the homemaker will adapt the ideas presented in this bulletin to fit her particular space or storage need. These ideas may help her in planning for her new cupboards or may suggest additional ways to improve her present storage spaces.

# Storage Requirements at Work Centers

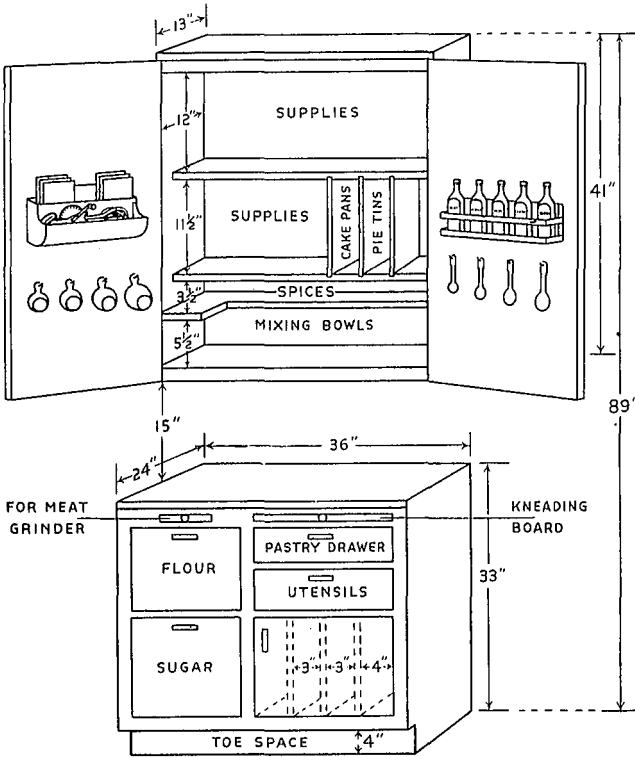


FIG. 1. Mixing center

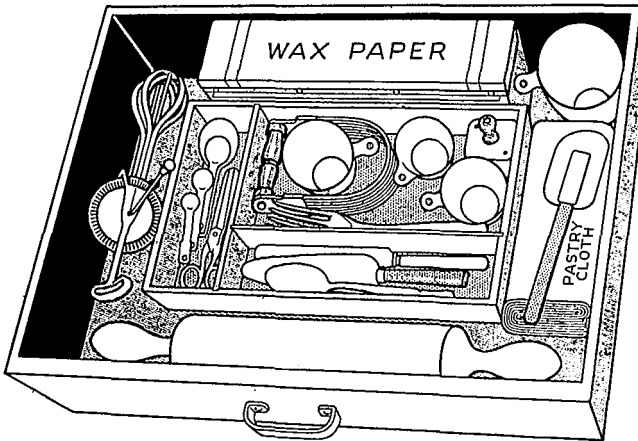


FIG. 2. Pastry drawer

**At the Mixing Center.** It is at this center that bread, cakes, pies, casserole dishes, and other foods are prepared. Therefore, suitable storage should be provided for such food materials as flour, sugar, baking powder, flour, soda, spices, and extracts (figure 1).

The equipment that will be used here includes mixing bowls, measuring cups, measuring spoons, flour sifter, rolling pin, cutters, beaters, mixing spoons, electric mixer, pastry blender, pastry board or cloth, baking tins, cooling racks, and casseroles.

A drawer fitted with a silverware tray for pastry equipment saves time in finding the desired tool (see figure 2).

A counter space at this center makes it possible to prepare food where the equipment and materials are stored. The mixing counter should be lower than other counters, 32 or 33 inches from the floor, and should be located near the sink and range.

An old base cabinet (figure 3) can be made into a more efficient mixing center by placing wall shelves above the cabinet. The roller of nonsticking oilcloth takes the place of cup-

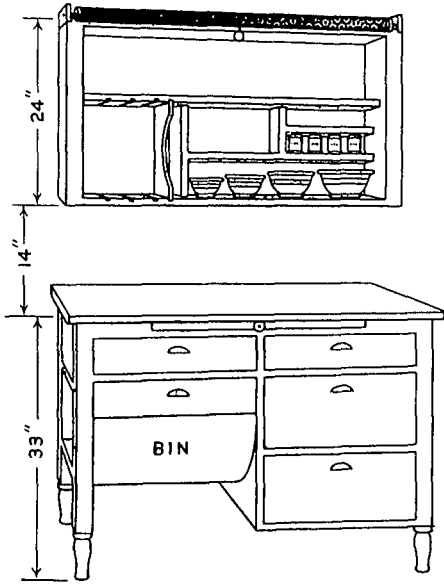


FIG. 3. Old base cabinet with wall shelves

board doors. A low cabinet may be raised and additional drawer space provided by the method shown in figure 4.

**At the Cleaning Center.** Primarily, it is at this center that vegetables and fruit are prepared for salads or cooking and the dishes are washed. Storage is needed for paring knives, vegetable brush, strainers, slicers, graters, vegetable pans, cutting board, and similar equipment. Utensils filled at the sink and then placed on the range belong at this center. Dish-washing equipment, cleansers, and towels are used here. Space for a garbage container or a garbage disposal is essential, and counter space at each side of the sink is desirable (figure 5).

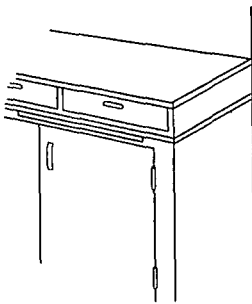


FIG. 4. Drawer space added on top of low cabinet

The dish cupboard at the left

FIG. 5. Cleaning Center

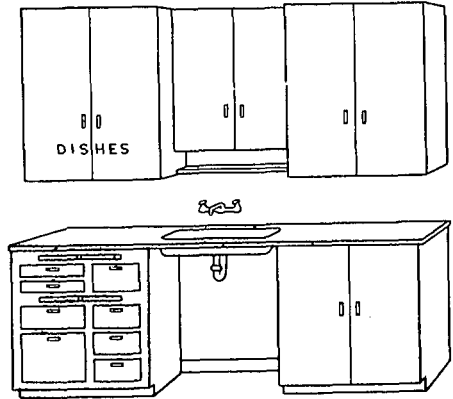


FIG. 5. Cleaning Center

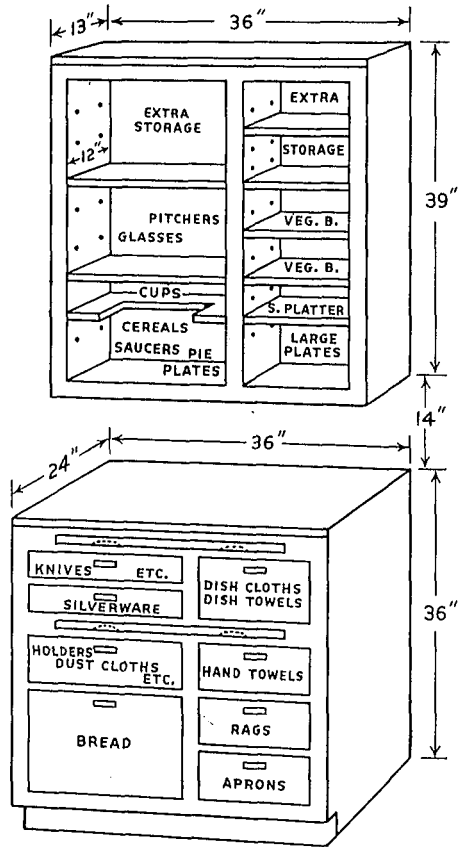


FIG. 6. Dish cupboard and storage at left of sink

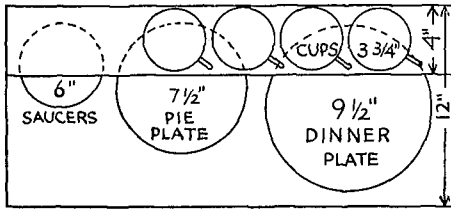


FIG. 7. Paper pattern to plan arrangement of dishes and equipment

of the sink should be designed to hold everyday dishes. The base unit may be planned for silverware, cutlery such as paring knives and slicers, kitchen linens, and ready-prepared food (see figure 6).

Plan the arrangement of items to be stored by measuring or using paper patterns. Figure 7 shows the planning for use of a 12-inch shelf with step shelves added to increase space and eliminate stacking.

The base unit at the *right* of the sink in figure 5 was planned for cleaning equipment and supplies. The wall unit is useful for storage of dried fruit and other food materials prepared at the sink. The remaining space may be used for the extras which every family has.

If a shallow cupboard, similar to figure 8, is desired above the sink and additional storage is provided below the sink, the right hand unit (figure 5)

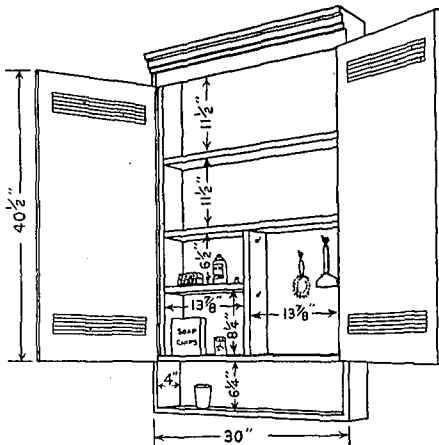


FIG. 8. Shallow cupboard above the sink

may be equipped for the mixing center. If this counter is too high, a work table can be rolled to this center when mixing food materials.

**At the Cooking Center.** The cupboard illustrated in figure 9 provides storage for seasonings, coffee, coffee pot, hot pan holders, matches, saucepans, covers,

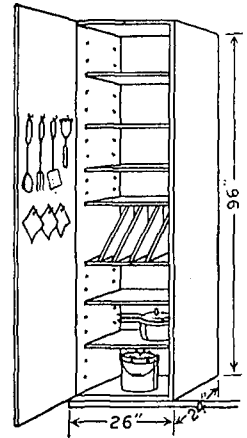


FIG. 9. Storage cabinet at cooking center

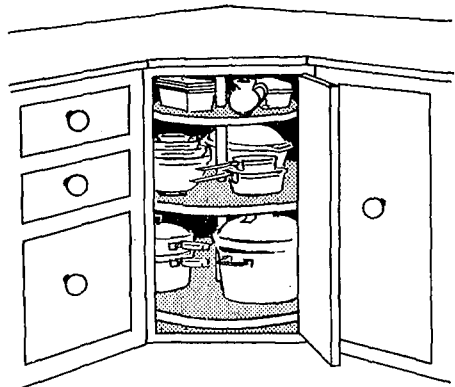


FIG. 10. A Lazy Susan turntable

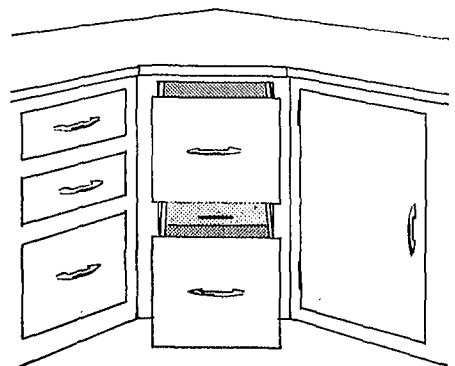


FIG. 11. Drawer for corner

baking tins, cookers, food materials, and other items commonly used at the cooking center. If the dish cupboard is too far away, store the serving dishes here. Make good use of space by hanging utensils where possible.

**Use of Corners.** When cupboards are

built around the kitchen, the dead corner area can be made more usable by the addition of a Lazy Susan turntable (figure 10). Another idea is to place drawers across the corner (figure 11). These can be pulled out so the back can be reached.

## Special Features to Consider

**Conveniences for Old Cupboards.** Cupboard spaces may be improved by adding boards, shelves, and racks. The lap board is useful in the kitchen that is too small for a work table with comfortable height for the seated worker (figure 12). It should be 25 to 26½

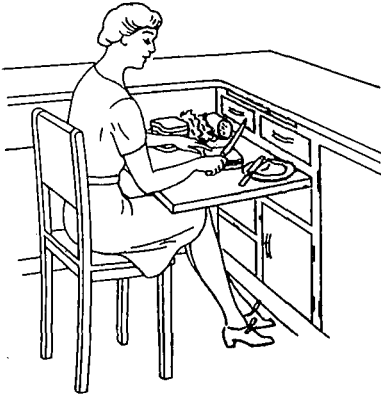


FIG. 12. A lap board is useful in the small kitchen

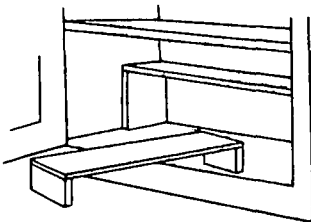


FIG. 13. Step shelves provide additional storage space

inches from the floor and should be provided with a stop so that it will not pull all the way out.

Step shelves (figure 13) reduce confusion and provide additional storage space. They can be made from wooden cheese boxes, fruit boxes, or plywood. The pull-out shelf illustrated here (figure 14) makes items in the base cupboard more accessible. Provided with guides and rollers, it will operate smoothly.

Racks for knives, spices, covers, and the rolling pin (figure 15—A, B, C, and D) are other easily added conveniences. They may be made at home or purchased in either metal or wood. Racks on doors require space within the cupboard when the cupboard doors are closed. The bar on the spice rack should

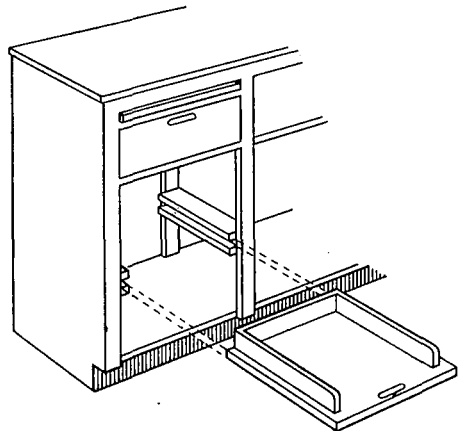


FIG. 14. Pull-out shelf

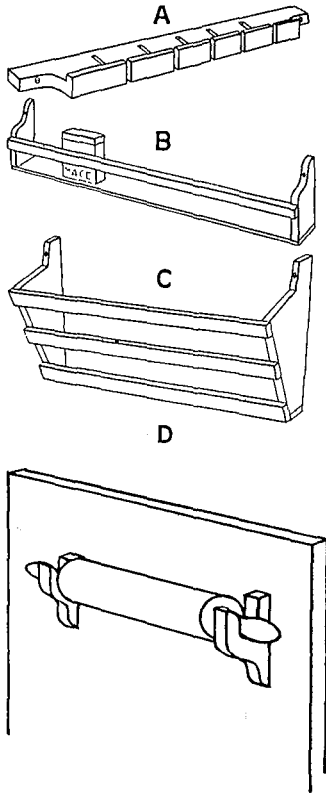


FIG. 15. Useful racks for knives (A), spices (B), covers or pie tins (C), and rolling pin (D)

not conceal labels on containers. A narrow shelf at the end of the mixing cupboard or a rack on the door is handy for the egg beater. Dividers are useful for the cutlery drawer (figure

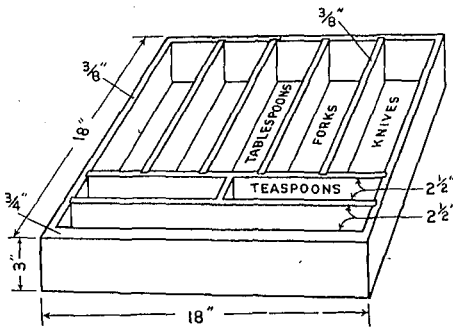


FIG. 16. Dividers for cutlery drawer

16) and vertical partitions in cupboards reduce storage requirements of covers, baking tins, platters, and trays (see figures 1 and 9).

**Working Areas.** The homemaker may reduce daily fatigue by planning the width and height of work areas. By extending her arms when seated and when standing, she can determine her normal and maximum reaching capacity (figure 17).

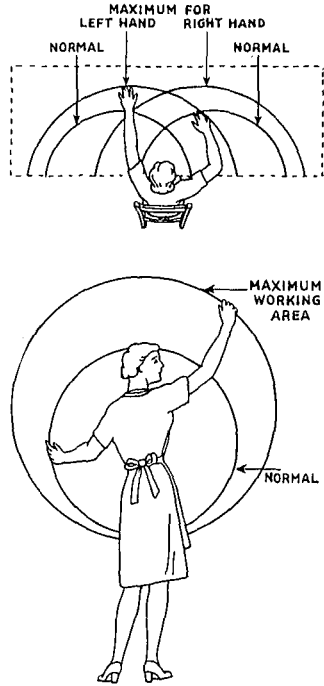


FIG. 17. Determining normal and maximum reaching capacity when seated and standing

**Spacing Shelves.** A great deal of fatigue and inconvenience can be avoided if adjustable shelves are provided in cupboards. To determine the limit of her reach for commonly used items, the homemaker should reach up. The distance from the floor to the wrist of her upstretched arm is her *maximum, comfortable, safe reach*. The extent of the reach will be a few inches more if no work surface intervenes.

# Three Sources of Kitchen Cabinets

**Commercial Cabinets.** Manufactured cabinets are available in stock sizes. They are usually obtainable in such a wide range of sizes and qualities that they fill almost any requirement of the home kitchen.

**Prefabricated Parts of Cabinets.** The parts that are difficult to make can be purchased and then assembled at home. The parts that can be selected from stock sizes are fronts, doors, shelving, drawers, bins, and work tops.

**Home-Constructed Cabinets.** The cost and quality of these cabinets will vary with workmanship and materials. To reduce the cost of a permanent cabinet the ceilings and walls of the room can serve for the top, ends, and back of the cabinet. Other cabinets should be fitted with tops, backs, and ends. Rough lumber, orange crates, and packing boxes are possibilities for very low-cost storage. Use a finish to fit in with the color scheme.

## Recommended Measurements for Cabinets

**BASE CABINETS:** Height 32 or 33 inches for mixing cabinet or 34 to 36 inches for others; depth 24 inches. Toe space 4 inches.

**WALL CABINETS:** Height in line with top of doors. Usually 6 feet 8 inches from the floor and drop ceiling or a 16-inch section above for extra storage; depth 12 inches. Distance from wall cabinet to counter, 14 to 16 inches.

**CUPBOARD ABOVE SINK:** Height in line with top of doors; depth 4 to 6 inches.

**SINK UNIT:** Minimum length of counter at left of sink, 32 inches; minimum at right of sink, 36 inches; desirable length of sink bowl, 30 inches. Minimum over-all length, 8 feet 2 inches (32 + 36 + 30). Distance from sink floor to floor of room, 30 to 32 inches.

**UTILITY CUPBOARD:** Height 64 to 68 inches or in line with top of doors with an upper two-shelf cupboard for extra storage; depth 14 to 24 inches.

**BUILT-IN BOARDS:** Front to back about 20 inches; thickness  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch.

Kneading board—20 to 24 inches wide.

Breadboard—13 to 15 inches wide.

Cutting board for meat, etc.—15 to 20 inches wide.

Food chopper board (hardwood)—6 to 10 inches wide.

(Wider and thicker at rear so will wedge when pulled out about 4 inches).

Lap board—25 to 26½ inches from floor; 26 to 30 inches wide.

Ironing board—height 30 inches; width 14 inches; length about 4 feet 6 inches.

Depth of cupboard for the board: 4 to 6 inches.

**ALLOWANCES FOR CONSTRUCTION:** Thickness of counter top  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch; width of lateral strip under counter to first opening 1½ inches; width of lateral strips between drawers  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch; width of vertical strips 1½ inches.

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