

Kitchen Design to Encourage Home Cooking

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Abstract. As lives grow busier and waistlines grow larger, a number of nutritionists are calling for Americans to reduce their risk of obesity-related health problems by cooking at home more and eating out less. We need to encourage home cooking. To do this we need to make cooking at home an attractive, viable alternative to eating out and develop kitchen design strategies and educational programs to increase home cooking and dining for all family members. We have developed a universally designed kitchen that will provide a supportive environment for all family members to be involved in food preparation. Our presentation includes a kitchen plan and illustrations of the UD features designed to support healthy food preparation techniques for all. This kitchen and other Universal Design Case Studies are described in the recently published book *Universal Design: Principles and Models*, and the accompanying *Instructor's Manual*.

Keywords. Kitchen, Obesity, Cooking, Universal Design

Today, two thirds of American adults are obese or overweight. Overeating and its lethal companion, under-exercising, are the recognized culprits in the USA's rise in obesity rates. As lives grow busier, and waistlines grow larger, a number of nutritionists are calling for Americans to reduce their risk of obesity related health problems by cooking at home and eating out less. Those of us concerned about the obesity epidemic are battling an entire environment, massive societal change, government policy and billions of dollars in advertising that all influence family eating habits. Advertising, fast-paced living, convenience foods, and treats every time one turns around are keeping us away from healthful eating choices. Americans even eat an average of 30 meals a year in their vehicles and these meals are most likely purchased at fast food restaurants. In order to reduce our dependence on processed, prepared fast food and to encourage food preparation in the home, we must make cooking at home an attractive, economical, viable alternative to "eating out" and develop kitchen design strategies and educational programs to increase home cooking and dining for all family members. The kitchen design we have proposed will support all family members sharing responsibility for the family's food preparation and enjoyment of family meals. Specific design directives will be added to the kitchen plan designed by a member of our team. The overriding principles of user-friendly kitchen design provide families with a kitchen that supports shared activities promoting a healthier lifestyle based on foods prepared from fresh ingredients. The kitchen design shown supports all members in food preparation and planning strategies and enables team decision making and

delegation of duties. The work centers designed for the *kitchen-to-accommodate-a-family-of-cooks* provide for age-appropriate features, safety, quick preparation, and quick clean up. Multiple work areas are part of the solution. These work centers support family food preparation activities based on the National Kitchen and Bath Association (NKBA) recommended guidelines of selection, preparation, serving and cleanup.

The floor plan of the Sullivan House kitchen, which follows, illustrates some of the best features of a UD designed kitchen. Notice that it contains multiple work areas, is accessible for all, and generally includes good circulation and traffic flow. Specific work areas can be seen at the far left where a soda fountain/bar are located, the center's U-shaped traditional work area, and the far right cleanup area with its sink and dishwasher.

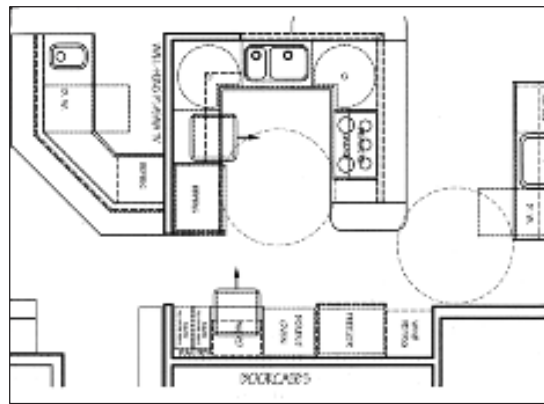


Figure 1. Sullivan House kitchen

We recommend selected UD features for the family kitchen:

- Smart controls/technology: touch or motion activated controls for the oven, microwave, dishwasher
- Cleanup options: multiple sinks double as preparation areas
- Water sources: near the cook top with a high clearance for filling pots, in fountain area for a quick glass of water, with a companion garbage disposal for cleanup
- Fixtures: the versatile Kohler faucet tube for flexible positioning
- Induction cook top: safer than traditional gas or electric ranges with heat proof surface, modular and smooth easily cleaned features
- Dish washer: i.e. the Fisher Paykel type appliance with accessible drawers for children and / or wheelchair users

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