

 West Lothian Council	Environmental Health		SUBJECT: KITCHEN LAYOUT PLANNING
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		Pest Control/Dog Warden	

Information Sheet FH26

Planning the Layout of your Kitchen

Introduction

It is important to have the right equipment in your kitchen, to keep it clean and in good condition. But it is also important to have the kitchen planned properly. A good layout makes it easier to work. A badly planned kitchen will not work properly; it can increase the risk of cross contamination, and will make serious accidents more likely.

Basic Principles

The main idea is to have a logical workflow, so that food moves through the kitchen in a sequence from raw materials through to finished dishes ready for service.

By preventing work from crossing over at different stages, we help to keep raw and cooked food apart, so reducing cross contamination.

Planning a kitchen to work in this way is much easier when designing a new one of course, but an existing kitchen can often be greatly improved by changing the layout to make it work better.

Think of the different operations that happen in a typical kitchen: **Delivery / storage / raw prep / cooking / cooked prep / storage / assembly / service / washing up**. We can consider how to best plan each of these areas in turn.

Deliveries

Always have deliveries made inside, never just left at the door. But equally you do not want delivery drivers carrying boxes right through the kitchen, and you need somewhere to check deliveries when they arrive. So set aside an area near the door where deliveries will come in. It will need to be big enough for the amount of food you expect to receive at one time, and should have a table so that you can check the delivery properly. Remember that many suppliers will now deliver daily, and this cuts down the amount of space you need for both deliveries and storage.

In planning bigger developments, it is good practice to make sure larger lorries can make their deliveries easily by making sure that the kitchen is near the delivery yard.

Storage

Decide first what storage you need. Will you need to store dry goods, vegetables, raw meat, cooked food, frozen food, dairy produce and other perishable foods? Now think of how much of each you need to keep, and what facilities you will need. There is one Golden Rule for storage. You will always need more than you think!

Now plan where the storage will fit. There are some general rules to follow. Keep raw food storage away from storage for ready to eat food. Think where each type of food will be prepared and handled, and try to have the storage close to the area where the food will be worked on.

Raw Food Preparation Area

This should be close to the vegetable store and should have its own sink for food washing. Keep the equipment you will use for raw food prep – such as boards, knives etc.- in this area. Allow storage space for this equipment.

If space permits, have a separate part for preparing raw meats because these carry the highest risk of spreading bacteria particularly E coli O157.

Remember that salad is a raw food, but it will not be cooked to kill bacteria, so it is a special case. If a bacterium from raw meat gets on to salad then it can cause food poisoning, so they must be kept apart. Equally, salad can pass harmful bacteria on to cooked foods, so these must be kept apart as well. Plan for this.

Cooking

If food is properly cooked then harmful bacteria are killed. After cooking, food must not go back into a raw food area because of the risk of cross contamination. So, the cooking area should come in between the raw prep and other areas of the kitchen to prevent this.

Have an area to one side of your cooker for raw ingredients awaiting cooking.

Have an area to the other side of your cooker where freshly cooked food can be placed before it is served or worked on.

Cooked / Ready to Eat Food Preparation Area

Some cooked foods need further preparation, and this has to be done in an area away from raw preparation. So set aside an area that will only be used for cooked and ready to eat food. Keep the equipment you will use for these foods in this area too.

Cooked / Ready to Eat Food Storage

The risk of cross contamination is far lower if you have a separate refrigerator just for storage of cooked and ready to eat food. It is vital that you have enough space to store all your perishable food safely. Think of how much food this will involve at any one time, and plan the space accordingly.

Assembly

When meals are made up, several different foods need to be handled in a short time. The area to do this needs to be close to the cooking area, and storage, and the pick up point, to avoid people rushing across the kitchen carrying hot food. If you plate up several meals at a time, allow enough space for the number of plates needed to be stored and laid out.

Service

Serving staff should not have to go into or through any food prep areas to pick up the meals for service. Ideally service should be through a hatch or across a counter to avoid this risk completely.

Washing up

The wash up area will become heavily contaminated with waste and bacteria, and so it must be kept well away from food preparation areas. Consider where dirty dishes and equipment will be stacked before washing, where the draining area will be, and how you will organise putting cleaned items away. Plan these to make sure that there is no chance of cross contamination between dirty and clean areas. **See the information sheet on cleaning and disinfection FH06**

Other factors

Wash Hand Basins

Washing your hands properly and regularly is a basic principle of good hygiene. In very large kitchens a hand basin in every work area is ideal. Most kitchens cannot do this, so a good compromise is to have one in the raw food area, and another in the cooked food area to reduce the risk of cross contamination. Just having one basin in a busy kitchen can be risky. If staff cannot get to it quickly and easily then they may not bother. If one basin is all that you can manage, then the kitchen is probably so small that there is only one place a basin will go. But, if you have a choice then somewhere near the door is good so that staff have to pass it (and use it) when they come into the kitchen.

Ensure that materials for cleaning and drying hands are available next to the wash hand basin. We would recommend displaying a poster showing hand wash practice.

The guidance from the Food Standards Agency is that hands be washed under running water. The wash hand basin requires to be provided with a supply of hot and cold water, ideally mixed to 41°C. If possible, the wash hand basin would be non hand operated, though not a legal requirement. Using a mixer tap will provide this water temperature although it is a hand contact point. Where the wash hand basin has hot and cold taps and the hot water from the tap is hotter than 41°C, then fitting a thermostatic mixer valve will allow you to regulate the hot water temperature. Taps should be turned off using paper towel to prevent the recontamination of hands. A foot operated pedal bin means one less hand contact point. **See information sheet FH09**

Equipment

To reduce cross contamination it is best to keep the equipment you will use in the area where you will use it, so allow storage space. This helps prevent the same equipment being used for cooked and raw foods.

Further help

Remember it is your responsibility to ensure that the food served to your customers is safe. If you would like help, or need any further advice, then please contact us on 01506 280000 or environmentalhealth@westlothian.gov.uk