

DESIGNING A KITCHEN FOR ENTERTAINING II

Whether it's a small, intimate dinner, a large cocktail soiree or a bustling indoor/outdoor family event, one thing is universal: **THE PARTY ALWAYS SEEMS TO END UP IN THE KITCHEN.** It is, after all, natural for people to seek proximity to food for both social and biological reasons. But how does one design a kitchen that is ideal for the purpose of entertaining? A plan wherein the cook(s) and server(s) can work easily, the hosts can choose the nature of their interaction with guests, and partygoers can be encouraged to move in a desired flow. Can any size kitchen be made to work for parties? Here are a few pointers:

The first consideration is the type of entertaining that you do most often. Are your events small, intimate dinner parties, large business functions, or occasional family gatherings at holidays? The practical requirements will vary for each. The next constraint is the actual size of your kitchen space. Also, take a look at adjacent areas--can that space be scavenged to enlarge the kitchen, or serve as an adjunct area for entertaining, such as a conversion to a scullery or clean-up center, or a buffet/serving area/breakfast nook?

The following elements are the pivotal concerns of a kitchen designed for entertaining:

- **Traffic flow** - an uninterrupted area in which the cook(s) work, a clear pathway for guests to circulate around food being served, and easy access to designated seating.
- **Multiple work areas** - a large home might have space for a secondary,(prep) kitchen, often intended for caterers' use. But even if there are space constraints, which are often the case, we can incorporate concepts such as a separate prep sink, a baking center, and a stovetop zone with its own water source for cooking. In a small kitchen these work areas often overlap or serve double duty at different stages of the party.
- **Attention to food storage** - how much space is needed to keep prepared food at proper temperature? Which items must be refrigerated, and on what size platters or trays?
- **Beverage service** - how do we keep the beverages hot or cold and where can we make them easily available for guests to serve themselves?
- **Suitable materials/maintenance**- for example, if you plan to have a lot of children's parties, you might do well to avoid white cabinets. If you'd like to serve lots of wines at large cocktail parties, a limestone countertop might not be a good choice.
- **Equipment** - this goes back to the type of entertaining, and ranges from the most practical (convection ovens) to the sublime (an outdoor pizza oven). From ice machines and wine chillers to built-in coffee or espresso machines, there are many wonderful, innovative products and appliances that can make entertaining easier.
- **Enlisting use of outdoor space** - whether your yard contains a simple grill or hibachi and some lawn chairs, or a multi-level deck and swimming pool that can accommodate a complete outdoor kitchen, almost everyone can create some type of outdoor entertaining area. We in the Central Coast are blessed with a lovely climate that is hospitable almost all year round, and an outdoor cooking/dining area can be attractively integrated with beautiful landscaping while also easing some of the pressure on limited indoor space.



Our job at San Luis Kitchen is to work with you to design a kitchen incorporating all of the above into a workable plan--a showcase for your home--so that your friends can hardly wait for you to host that next Party in the Kitchen!

By Lisha Perini, Certified Kitchen Designer with San Luis Kitchen Co.--celebrating its 25th anniversary as the longest continuously-running kitchen design showroom in San Luis Obispo.

