

# “A Kitchen Tailor-made for a Cook who uses a Wheelchair”

by Sarah Day

A lovely lady came in to our showroom this summer with plans to remodel her kitchen (let’s call her Mrs. B). The driving force behind the remodel was that her counters, appliances and storage areas were practically inaccessible to her as she uses a wheelchair to get around. She has a great electric powered chair and she could stretch and reach for things, but the kitchen wasn’t a comfortable space for her to work in. It took all the fun out of cooking for her family.

The timing was perfect – Wood-Mode (our cabinet manufacturer) had just launched a new program in which our cabinets can be made any special size for no extra charge. This allowed us to create a very custom kitchen at a very reasonable price. (Mrs. B told us the other bids she got were higher than ours & that they couldn’t make the cabinets she needed!)



At the San Luis Kitchen showroom, we showed Mrs. B the bathrooms we had designed to be handicap accessible. We have two bathrooms in different styles – both are designed to be appropriate in a home (non-institutional!). Believe me, this wasn’t easy.

Mrs. B had several basic needs that she wanted addressed. When Mrs. B first came in, she knew that she wanted a 27” high counter with no cabinets below it for a work-station/baking area, she wanted an area of standard 36” counter for her husband to use, and to have her oven mounted at a height she could reach. She also needed a mid-height counter elsewhere in the kitchen, knee space below the sink and cooktop, higher than standard toe kicks, and pull-out storage for easy accessibility.

First, the work station at 27” high could have no support bracket or front rib as it would hit the armrests of her chair when she pulled in close. Our solution – using aircraft aluminum board flat under the Corian in this section to add strength & stiffness. After measuring Mrs. B’s reach and much deliberation on what would be most comfortable for her, we mounted the oven 20” above the floor so that when open, cooked items would be at the ideal height for retrieval.

Under the sink (a model by Kohler designed for easy access) we mounted matching doors to hide the plumbing. We angled these back so to give adequate knee space and added some towel rings either side for convenience. We copied the angled door detail under the cooktop for continuity and added a pot filler faucet to make things easier. Again, we measured Mrs. B and together decided that the counter height here needed to be 32”, so we sized the cabinets accordingly and made the Corian counter only 1” thick. This height allows her to actually see into her pans while cooking and comfortably stir her food and also to easily reach the back of the sink.



All toe kicks in the kitchen are 6 ½”

high so Mrs. B can get close to the counter without banging her feet into the cabinets. Again we measured to get the ideal toe height just for her. We provided lots of drawers, two pull-out base pantries, a lazy susan, two pull-out trash stations, and an under counter microwave. The pantry has five roll-out shelves for lots of easy access food storage. At the dishwasher and next to the pantry we provided a standard 36” high counter for her husband’s convenience – Mrs. B wanted the kitchen to fit the rest of the family too as cooking is a collaborate effort in their home.



The experience of designing for Mrs. B has reinforced our belief in creating kitchens tailor-made for the individuals using them no matter what their needs.