

# **How To Organize Your Kosher Kitchen**

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## **Did you know you owned a Valuable Piece of Real Estate? It's your Kitchen!**

Kitchens in general are the most “expensive” piece of real estate in your home. Why's that? Because...

### **Rule #1: EVERYTHING COUNTS.**

That's because the kitchen is your mudroom, mail center, phone charging center, cooking, and entertaining area. It's the heart of the home and everyone loves to gather there.

This rule not only applies to every kitchen out there, but triple fold to kosher kitchens. Why? Not only do we have double, triple, sometimes quadruple the amount of stuff that other people's kitchens hold, but because of our Yiddishkeit.

Jewish Holidays and Shabbos involve a lot of food. That's the bottom line. The kitchen is the physical and spiritual heart of the home.

And we need to take care of that heart because if the kitchen is in disarray, your whole home and life is bound to be in disarray.

If there is no logical place for the kids lunchboxes and room to prepare lunches and snacks, most likely you are struggling to leave the house every morning- a stressful and often resentful activity.

If you don't have enough aluminum foil on a Friday when you are attempting to bake, your baking is often waylaid and Shabbos preparations are pushed off, causing a lot of rush and needs being overlooked.

I think you've got it. I don't want to dwell too much on the problems of a disorganized kitchen. Just that you **MUST** know that every inch of the kitchen is prime and therefore, make sure your valuable property is not cluttered up with mismatched Tupperware lids and broken hand mixers.

That said, we are going to talk more about how to give your kitchen the respect that it needs and deserves. Remember, everything counts!

### **Rule #2- A Kosher Kitchen needs to be divided up into Halves.**

Even if you have the smallest kitchen in the universe, you need to divide up the kitchen into 2 for milk and meat. Whether you are working with 2 separate islands, cutting boards, or even just one cabinet, divide that space into half with a meat section and milk section.

If you have one countertop, have two separate cutting boards, dividing your countertop into “half”. That is how you keep a kosher kitchen.

You can do other things to ensure kashrus and kosher mishaps like color coding pots and pans and dishes. Or only using cold water when you work so nothing gets “treifed” up. Labeling is essential for putting things back in the right place.

Don't be afraid to keep a kosher kitchen! If you are really afraid, use glass dishes, which are easy to kosher if they get mixed up somehow.

Make your kitchen look like 2 kitchens- like I said, even if you have to use one shelf for fleishig and one shelf for milk in the same cabinet!

Consult your Rav and find out what is really necessary in keeping a kosher kitchen without going overboard.

You don't have to have 3 of everything- I rarely use Pareve except for baking. If you keep your baking pans pareve, then you can serve your baked good at either a meat meal or dairy meal. But you don't need a whole set of pareve silverware and dishes! Keep a couple of spoons and knives that are pareve and your baking wares and that's it!

## **Let's Start With What *Your* Kitchen Looks Like**

Everyone's kitchen has at least some counter space, cabinet space, and drawer space. Most likely you have a refrigerator and freezer too. If you are lucky, you have room for a pantry and kitchen table. Some of you may not have room for a pantry or table.

But I'd wager to say that you do have counters, cabinets, and some drawer space.

You know you need to maximize the space in your kitchen when you are jamming your fingers in the drawers, don't know where things are or where to put items back, have to look for lids and maybe even end up using mismatched lids on things, open up your cabinets only to have things fall out.

**I'd like to help you get to the point that your kitchen is streamlined down to what you use on a regular basis, have a need for, and is within reach to you, comfortably and conveniently.**

## **Find Out What's Actually In Your Kitchen**

Sometimes this task is called by other, more intimidating names like “home inventory”. I'm not going to call it that because for some reason, to me, asking you to conduct a home inventory sounds more daunting than the process of walking around your kitchen and determining what you own and how much of it you have.

That's all I want you to do. Get out a piece of paper or a voice recording device. Walk around your kitchen and start talking or writing as you open up a drawer. For example, "In this cabinet I have plastic bags, tons of Tupperware containers, 3 water pitchers, and 6 tablecloths." Become aware of what is deep inside the drawers and cabinets.

Many people don't even know what they have! Can you make this mission fun in any way? Like- playing music or doing it with someone else? Having them write a list while you go around and mutter? Or, write your list just as you are saying it. "I can't believe I have so many %^\*()\_ water bottles? What was I thinking?" Lists of mutterings can be funny to read later on.

Get curious about what lurks inside your kitchen.

I hope you can now appreciate what I've emphasized above. EVERYTHING COUNTS. Every inch of your kitchen MUST be utilized well because otherwise, the whole home is disorganized.

When you walk around your kitchen and see appliances and things you don't use, that clutter is cutting into your most valuable real estate. Feel the ickiness of it. Taste the staleness of your kitchen. Identify those feelings of stagnancy and clutter and frustration and... well you get the picture.

**It doesn't feel right or good to have extraneous, broken, under utilized items in the kitchen. You know what those items are and gosh, you'll feel a lot better when they are gone.**

## **Do you Keep Your Stuffed Pig in The Kitchen?**

It's funny. I was giving a lecture about organizing and asked the question to the audience: "What's actually in your kitchen?" People were giving me the usual answers: China, dishes, silverware, plastic wrap. One woman said, "A Stuffed pig." She kept a very large stuffed animal, a pig mind you, in her kitchen. Maybe it was part of her decor! But nevertheless, a lot of people have things that do not belong in a kitchen. I'm not talking about regular old kitchen clutter. I'm talking about really foreign objects that are just in the kitchen because no one knew where else to put it!

I'm sure you don't keep stuffed pigs in your kosher kitchen, but there may be items that are less obvious to you that don't really need to be in your kitchen. Sports equipment...maybe seems like is along the lunch box line but really is not. Get the sports equipment out of there into a deck box outside if you have nowhere else in the house to store it all.

**Remember Principle #1- EVERYTHING COUNTS IN A KITCHEN!**

## Here We Go! Let the Fun Begin!

Get a lot of trash bags ready, some boxes or laundry baskets (4 at least- “to sell”, “to donate” “to put away somewhere else” “give to a friend”), pens, tape, scissors, markers, and paper, highlighters, and cleaning rags. Splurge on a labelmaker if you like, you’ll see why in a little bit.

### Get ready, get set, organize and make every space count!

You’ve felt the yuckiness of your kitchen clutter. Want to be done with it already. Good for you. Here’s how to start.

You can either go through one cabinet, drawer, or countertop one at a time, ONLY if you are quick to make decisions. I don’t want you opening up a drawer and thinking for a while- “well, I could really use this. I don’t want to let this go...”

If you think you will have a hard time with decision making, then JUST sort through your kitchen putting like items into piles. No need to make decisions yet, just put all of the water pitchers in a pile, all the batteries in a pile, all of the milchig cookware in a pile.

Once your whole kitchen is sorted, then start making decisions about where these items should go: donation, trash, or away to a friend. Once you see the pile of maybe appliances and see how MANY there are in that pile, the decision to purge won’t be as hard.

Great job! You’re opening up cabinets, drawers, and taking things off the countertops, deciding to put them in various trashbags or laundry baskets to donate.

Put the donation pile and trashbags outside in your car when you are done so you are not tempted to take things back inside.

When in doubt, get it out! Be ruthless in weeding out your kitchen clutter. Do you want to clutter up prime real estate with things that are not useful to you?

If you have 3 sets of dishes and only use one set, put the other 2 sets in the basement. If you have a whole set of pareve pots and pans and only use one pan, keep one and store the rest or donate them!

## Where Should Everything Go Now?

Making sure you’re not putting anything back that you don’t use or is broken or that you feel iffy about, now it is time to put things back.

### Notice your Patterns

You may adjust this step a few times based on your personality and habits. I always recommend doing things according to habits. So if you always use oil and salt and spices at the stove, keep them there in a caddy.

Notice your other habits. Do you have to walk back and forth from the pantry to the fridge 10 times just to make a cup of coffee? Keep all of your coffee supplies, (and I do mean all!) together in one spot!

Start noticing what you do on a regular basis and assess whether or not it makes sense to keep working that way. Without trying to hard to change yourself.

Another example are baking supplies: keep the baking ingredients in a cabinet along with your baking tins, to create a baking center. Does that work for you? Or are you not making too many trips back and forth to bake? Start Noticing.

### Use your cabinets last

Cabinets are first to be completely used up. I want to make you away of the fact that you have four options for storage. These 4 rules apply to anything, anytime, anyplace, and anywhere.

- ❖ Hang it up
- ❖ In a Drawer
- ❖ On a Shelf
- ❖ On the Floor

Even in the smallest of kitchens, there are other options for storage besides the cabinets. So use them last, when you are putting everything back.

Now that you are putting things away, assess which storage option would be best for that grouping of stuff.

Your kids' lunches? How about on a rolling cart? This way, the kids can get their own lunches, rolling the cart away when it is not needed. Tuck it in the space between the refrigerator and the cabinets, or on either side of your stand-alone oven range.

See? Stuff doesn't all have to go back into your cabinets. Leave your cabinet space for last since it is the easiest space to fill up first.

Really consider your 4 storage options- **especially the one about hanging things up.** When looking for



ways to store things, always LOOK UP! Look at your walls. You can hang shelves from your walls, hang magnetic strips, put up hooks, there are many, many options and they are beautiful as well.

How about your Shabbos china? Can you display it on a wall shelf instead of in the cabinets?

Do you feel ready to put everything back now? Can I quiz you?

**List 4 ways you can store your spices other than putting them back into a drawer:**

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If you want to know what kosher kitchen organizing products I recommend you use, Go to <http://astore.amazon.com/bestorganizin-20>. Copy and paste this link if you can't click on it. I looked through all of the products myself and handpicked the best ones for kosher kitchens.

*May your Kosher Kitchen serve you well with 3x the Bracha of any old kitchen! Happy Organizing ☺*

*Rivka*

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