

Recipe for an Organized Holiday (and Everyday) Kitchen

By Lorraine J. Fine



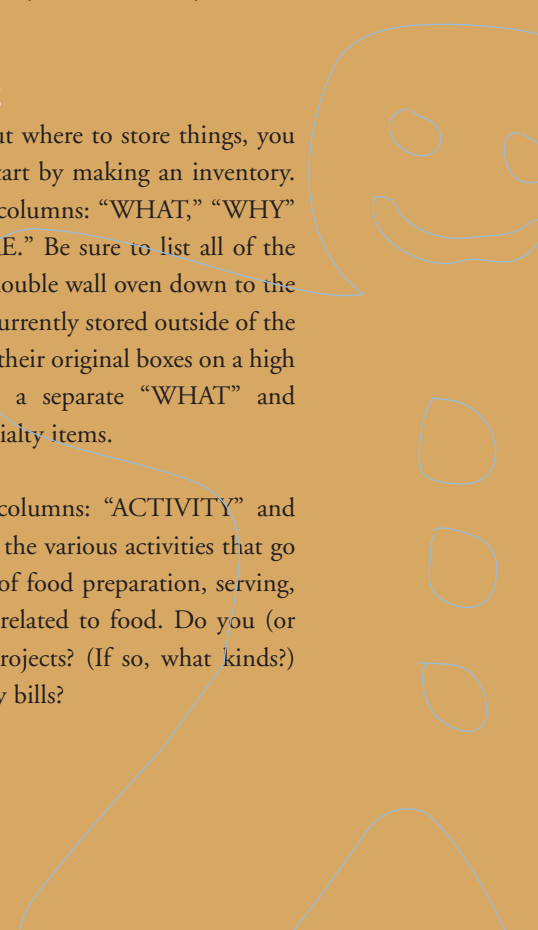
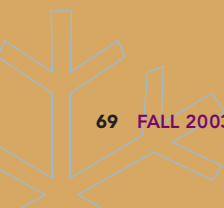
Whether you use them every day or just once a year, when you need kitchen items, you need them NOW. Could you easily find your holiday cookie cutters, punch set, table linens, candlesticks, and table decorations? What about your lettuce knife, the “good” skillet, or the popcorn salt?

One key to having your holiday celebrations run smoothly is knowing just where all the things you need are located. But it’s not only during the holidays that you need convenient, fail-safe access to your implements of food preparation and dining. Your everyday kitchen items, as well as your seasonal ones, should be stored in a manner that makes sense—not only to you, but to everyone who uses your kitchen.

DISCOVER WHAT YOU HAVE

Before you can begin to think about where to store things, you need to know what you have, so start by making an inventory. Divide a piece of paper into three columns: “WHAT,” “WHY” (what’s it used for?), and “WHERE.” Be sure to list all of the kitchen items you own, from the double wall oven down to the manual can opener. Include items that are currently stored outside of the kitchen (even those goodies tucked away in their original boxes on a high shelf in the basement or garage). Make a separate “WHAT” and “WHERE” list for once-a-year holiday specialty items.

Divide another piece of paper into two columns: “ACTIVITY” and “REQUIRES.” In *exquisite* detail, list all of the various activities that go on in your kitchen. Itemize all the aspects of food preparation, serving, and cleanup. Then list all the activities unrelated to food. Do you (or does anyone) open mail here? Work on projects? (If so, what kinds?) Work at a computer? Make phone calls? Pay bills?



UTILIZING YOUR LISTS

Making these lists is great preparation, whether you plan to hire a professional organizer or work on your own. Start with your “WHAT, WHY, & WHERE” page. Scan down the “WHERE” column and highlight the entries that say “basement,” “attic,” “garage,” or “storage room.” If you haven’t used these things at all or much lately, perhaps it’s time to make them available to someone else. Give them away or donate them to a charity and get a tax deduction at the same time.

Next, scan down the “WHY” column. See any duplication? Where you have a multi-function appliance that does its various tasks well, choose that one and donate the redundancies or give them to a friend. Bear in mind that the appliances that are on your countertops are the ones that you will use the most.

Now check your “WHY” column for items that are used only for holidays. Pack these into containers, label them clearly, and store them where you can access them easily for the applicable holiday.

MOVING THINGS AROUND

Unless you’re lucky enough to be designing your own kitchen from scratch, the location of the “built-ins” (fridge, sink, range, and cupboards) will largely determine where things go. Two basic principles to keep in mind as you make decisions: 1) Store things as close as possible to their point of use, and 2) Group like things together. Some organizing questions have multiple right answers! For example, dishes can be stored near the table where they will be used or near the sink or dishwasher

for ease of putting them away when they’re clean.

You are not “stuck” with the interior arrangement of the shelves, either in your fridge or in the cupboards. Usually those shelves are adjustable. Lower the top cupboard shelves enough to accommodate your tallest frequently used items, such as oils and vinegars. Use single-level turntables on your top and middle shelves, to bring all your of your bottles to the front at the touch of a finger. Use double-level turntables on your bottom shelves for your canned goods and jarred items like peanut butter.

Spices are best stored in a wall unit, in alphabetical order, making cooking easier for everyone who uses the kitchen. Small rectangular plastic or stainless steel baskets work wonders for containing flat packets, such as dried soups, sauces, gelatins, and pudding boxes.



Some organizing questions have multiple right answers!

KEEP ON KEEPING ON!

We’ve just scratched the surface here, but you’re on your way to having everything you need in your kitchen at your fingertips. And when a holiday rolls around from now on, just grab the appropriately labeled box and have yourself an organized and relaxed celebration.

Lorraine J. Fine,

M.Ed., is the founder of “The Mess Fairy” professional organizing service. Contact her at themess-fairy@alumni.tufts.edu or (617) 491-4834.