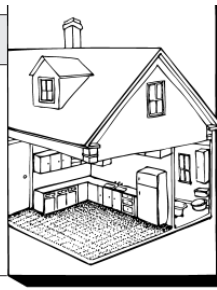


# Designing the Two-Cook Kitchen

by Joan Eisenberg



More and more I am being asked to design kitchens that will be used by two people working together to prepare meals. Because different people have different work habits, I always start the planning process by surveying the needs of both people. Some of the questions I ask, for example, are:

- What are the physical attributes of the two people? A very tall cook working with a very short cook will have a different set of counter-height criteria than two cooks of about the same height. A right-handed person will have different needs than a left-handed person.
- Who shops and puts away groceries, and when? Does one family member stop on the way home from work, bringing packages into the kitchen as another member is preparing dinner? If so, I consider having a separate unloading counter near the pantry space so as not to disturb the cook.
- Which cook does what? This is a crucial question — its answer tells me whether the kitchen needs extra appliances or whether shared equipment will work.

## Two-Cook Categories

The National Kitchen and Bath Association identifies several categories of multi-cook situations.

**Team cooking.** With team cooking, two or more people share equally in the preparation and cleanup of meals, with no clear authority figure giving directions. In this situation it is best to design the room with as little shared space as possible. If the budget can afford, the only shared equipment should be the refrigerator, and it should be placed so that one cook does not have to cross the path of the other to reach this very important leg of the work triangle.

**Assistant chef.** In this scenario, the assistant is generally given preparation

tasks such as washing and chopping vegetables. This situation calls for a second preparation center with a small sink that will keep the assistant close at hand but out of the primary cook's way.

**Specialty cooks.** This type of two-cook kitchen involves a primary cook for most preparation and cleanup and another cook (or cooks) that has a special interest in one type of cooking — someone who loves to make bread for instance. A separate baking center, designed with this activity and person in mind, will create an ideal kitchen for this household.

## Avoiding Traffic Jams

Once I determine which general category the family falls into, I use an additional set of rules that expand on the criteria used for a one-cook kitchen. The primary concern is to avoid traffic jams. In a one-person kitchen, I try to create traffic paths that keep noncooking family members out of the work triangle. In a two-cook kitchen, I use either a greatly expanded triangle, or more often, two triangles that may share one or two common points. This allows the two cooks to work without interruption and avoids that familiar “kitchen dance” commonly known as the Bump.

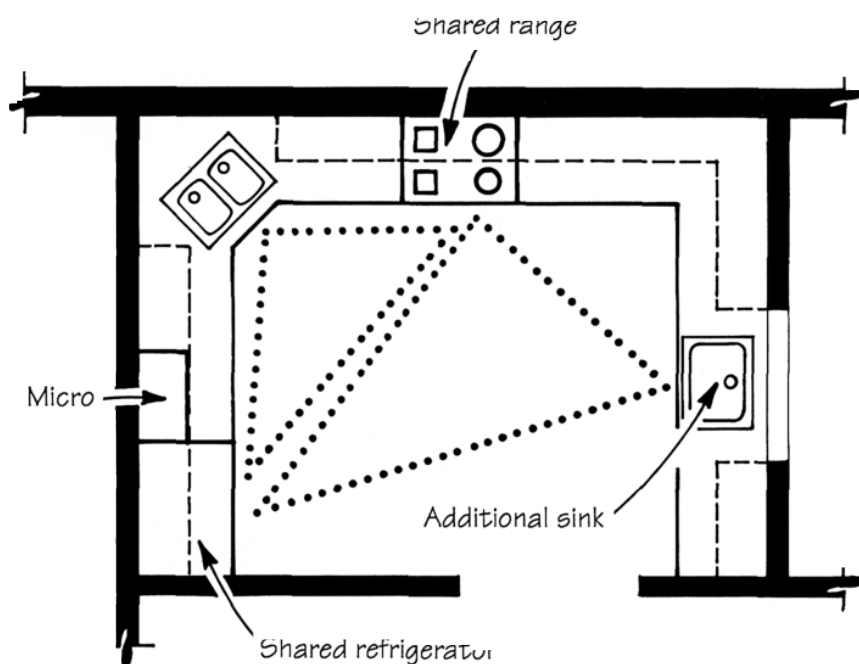
Another way to avoid traffic jams is to widen walkways. The traditional 42-inch space between cabinets or appliances is not adequate in a two-cook kitchen. Allow 48 to 54 inches for edging by, and 60 to 64 inches for the walking space. To determine which end of these ranges to use, I go back to the survey of the physical attributes and look at the size and weight of the individuals in question.

## Double Triangles

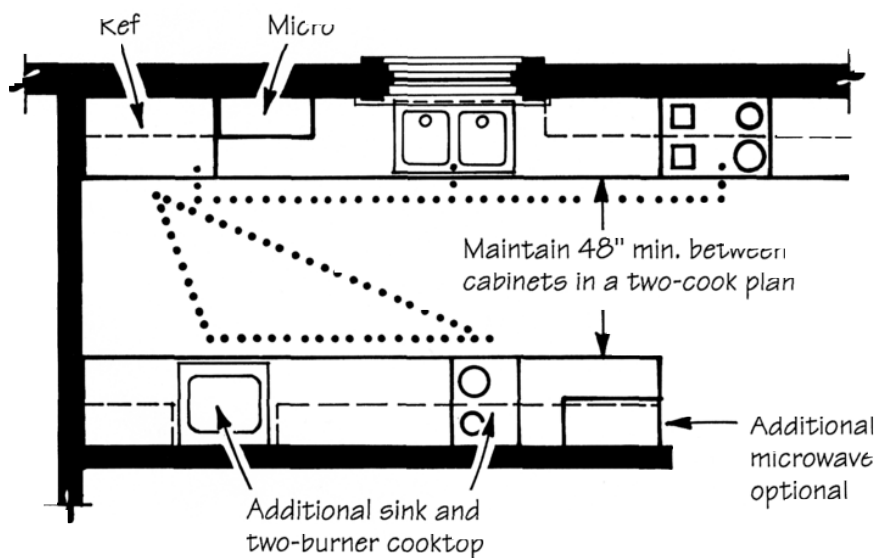
To establish two work triangles, you must have adequate counter space. This prevents the traffic jams that

## Two-Cook Designs

### U-Shape with Second Sink



### Galley with Second Sink and Cooktop



A U-shaped kitchen (top) can be ideal for two cooks. A second sink creates two work triangles, with the range and refrigerator shared. Even a galley (above) can work for two cooks — this plan uses a second sink and an additional two-burner cooktop.

occur when one of the two cooks spills over into the other's work space.

At a minimum, allow 36 inches of clear counter for each cook. It is best when this counter space is in two separate areas rather than in one 72-inch stretch.

Depending on the configuration of the room, any of the three major appliances — sink, cooktop, or refrigerator — can act as a divider. The interview helps determine which appliances can comfortably be shared and which need to be duplicated. Usually, the sink is the first fixture requested to be duplicated, with cooking equipment second, and the refrigerator a distant third.

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**In two-cook designs, the sink is usually the first fixture to be duplicated, with cooking equipment second, and the refrigerator a distant third**

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If space or budget does not allow for duplication, concentrate on placing the fixtures where they are convenient to both cooks. Also, strive for easily accessible storage of spices and cooking utensils.

**Islands useful.** Consider using a large island to provide an accessible shared work space. It can have a sink or cooktop that is accessed from both legs of an L-shaped kitchen. An island can also offer a secondary work counter for an assistant cook.

I've focused here on interviewing your clients to gather information about their cooking habits and lifestyles. But what about the builder of spec projects? My suggestion is that in today's market, it is probably safe to assume that most households will have more than one cook at some point. If at all possible, make provisions for an assistant cook even in a small kitchen. ■

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