

CLEVER STORAGE for Kitchen and Bath

My husband, Bob, and I run a design-build remodeling company in California's Silicon Valley. Many of our customers are engineers, so they expect cabinets to be highly functional and designed to fit their specific needs, in addition to being beautiful. Our in-house designers work closely with local cabinet shops to produce a tailored product. By rethinking standard configurations, they're able to create unusual storage solutions and make use of space that normally goes to waste.

For the best storage
solutions, you need to
think outside the box

by Susan Davis

Leftover Inches Put to Good Use

Problem: What can you do with an extra 6 inches in a run of cabinets?

Solutions: With custom cabinets, you can turn extra inches into specialized storage that's tailored to your clients' needs. In this kitchen, storage was added by turning decorative pilasters into pullouts for cooking supplies (photos at left).

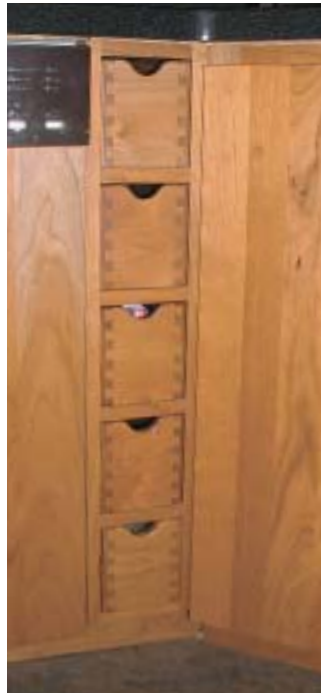
The same idea was used in the upper cabinets, where spaces that were too narrow for standard cabinet boxes were turned into pullout spice racks on either side of the stove (below).



In another kitchen, drawers added between the dishwasher and sink (at right) are just big enough to hold foil or wrap and are close to the workspace where they'll be used. The space they occupy is so narrow that it would be hard to use it for anything else.

Bathroom vanities often lay out with just a little extra space — and aren't there always a bunch of small items that clutter up the counters?

We use the extra space by building tiny drawers for articles like makeup, hair accessories, and medicine bottles (below). The bottom drawer is narrow but deep enough for extra shampoo bottles or bathroom cleaner.



Keeping the Cookbooks Close

Problem: Where should those cookbooks go? They need to be handy but out of the way, so they aren't constantly splattered.

Solution: If you have an extra 9 inches or so on the kitchen island, think about putting bookshelves on the ends instead of the usual blank panels. The client could also use this space to

display a collection of salt shakers or decorative tableware. One client, a professional chef, requested a utensil storage rack on the island end because it was within easy reach of the range.



Clutter Cabinet

Problem: Where can the client post the grocery list, appointment reminders, and the kid's soccer schedule instead of on the refrigerator?

Solution: We like to use something we call a "clutter concealing cabinet," a shallow unit with storage and even a bulletin board inside. The bulletin board can be on the back wall of the cabinet or on the inside face of one of the doors.

Phone books can be stored in a vertical rack, and pens and office supplies can be stored on shallow shelves.

If your client's daughter is the reincarnation of Rembrandt, you can provide a display board covered with fabric elsewhere for the art. The client can pin things up inside the art frame, and it will look like a planned piece of artwork. A less expensive option is to use homasote for the bulletin board and paint it to match the wall.



Keeping the Counters Clear

Problem: Your client uses every small kitchen appliance ever heard of but wants the countertops to be kept clear.

Solution: We like to design workspaces behind closed doors. A full-height pantry cabinet can be equipped inside with countertop, electrical outlets, and pullout breadboards for additional horizontal workspace. Most countertop kitchen appliances are designed to fit under upper cabinets placed 18 inches off the countertop, so be sure to allow at least that much space inside the pantry. Also, be sure to provide adequate clearance for heat-generating appliances such as toaster ovens.



Storing Everyday Dishware

Problem: Your clients' collection of fancy dishware is displayed on open shelves or in glass-front cabinets, so where do they store the everyday stuff?

Solution: Use a full-height pantry for storing dishes, not just food. Pullout shelves on full-extension slides make it easy to access dishes that are stored in back. These pantry cabinets are usually much deeper than a typical upper cabinet, and this allows for storage of big platters, chargers, and mixing bowls, as well as everyday dishes and glasses.



Dogfood Drawer

Problem: Brutus, the 150-pound indoor dog, eats in the kitchen, and his food and supplies take up more space than those of your clients.

Solution: Create a special drawer for his food and scoop, as well as the leash, brush, and other supplies. This deep drawer can hold one large bag of kibble and should be placed close to the feeding station. If you want, you can put the food and water dishes in an adjacent pullout or toe-kick drawer: Pull it out at mealtime, and push it back when he's done. The kitchen will be less cluttered with no big bag or messy dishes to trip over.



KIM RUDD

Just Like the Restaurant Kitchen

Problem: Your client is a professional chef and wants her home kitchen to be as functional as the restaurant kitchen.



RON INDRA

Solution: Her restaurant kitchen is functional because everything is within reach, not behind doors or in drawers. Create open upper cabinets to stack cookware and serving plates. This approach can be decorative as well as functional if the dishware is attractive. An island can have open shelves for large pots and trays and can allow easy access to bins of vegetables stored there. The cook shouldn't have to turn around or walk to another area of the kitchen when all six burners of the professional range are in use, so hang utensils near the range for easy reach at crucial times.



MERT CARPENTER

Recycling Made Easier

Problem: Where do you put the recycling bins that are so common these days? After all, recycled items are often wet or dirty, so no one wants to haul them across the room.

Solution: The 24x36-inch space under the sink provides the solution. This pullout puts two bins in the work area, right where the client needs them. The standard 10x14 trash cans rest on a pullout attached to the back of a drawer front that looks like a pair of doors. The cans are mounted sideways to clear the plumbing, and there's room left over to store shorter items in back.



KIM BUDD

Making the Most of the Lav Cab

Problem: The client wants drawer and shelf storage in a vanity, but the sink bowl and plumbing are in the way.

Solution: One of our cabinet subs suggested this bathroom vanity, which has a 5-inch-deep drawer on the bottom behind the cabinet door. On top of the drawer is a shelf for storing taller items, making them easier to reach than if they were on the floor of the cabinet. The drawer keeps smaller items organized and off the countertop, and it can be made deep enough to store extra toilet paper. There could just as easily be more than one drawer, or the drawer could be accessible without opening the door.



Blind Corner Engineering

Problem: What do you do with blind inside corners in the base cabinets?

Solution: Everyone knows about the lazy susan, but some of our clients prefer Häfele's dual-function slide-out (800/667-8721, www.hafeleonline.com/usa). This trick gizmo especially appeals to our engineer clientele. One wire storage unit is attached to the door, so that when the cabinet door opens, it comes out into the room, pulling another wire storage unit out of the dead space and into the cavity left by the unit attached to the door. The door unit can then open another 180 degrees to make access to the inside unit easier. I don't recommend these blind corner units for heavy things like canned food, but they're suitable for lighter items.



HAFELE

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