



10 Additional Common Errors in Kitchen Design and How to Avoid Them

by Foster Frable

11. *Providing necessary clearances for drawers extension and door swings, etc.* Equipment plans should always indicate the full swing of all doors into ovens, and refrigerators so that adjustments can be made to the layout before installation. In addition, door swings on refrigerators and warmers should be planned so that they open toward the intended work areas using that item. Even with the best planning efforts, ordering and shipping errors can and will occur. Therefore, purchasing any upright refrigerator without field reversible doors is not advisable.
12. *No space for bread and rolls.* Considerable space is required to support the large variety of different breads and rolls in demand by today's customer. Toast stations, deli and short order, and sandwich prep areas need enclosed drawers or cabinets to hold bread products within easy reach and protected from contamination. In facilities with a large breakfast volume, an open area 30-36 inches wide should be planned to accommodate a whole stack of standard bread racks as shipped from the bakery.
13. *No contingency funds for changes that occur between the time the facility is designed and opened.* No matter how carefully a plan is developed, many factors can affect the acceptability of a layout. On large projects months or even years can occur between the design phase and the completion of the installation. A new chef may wish to make radical changes to the menu. A structural wall may move 6 inches. Local codes may require additional clearances than shown on the plans. Projects should never be planned without a contingency in space or budget, so that changes that occur on any project can be accommodated.
14. *Lack of coordination with architects and engineers.* A 7-foot-high beam going through the middle of a hood or walk-in cooler, an unexpected column appearing in the middle of a cooking line—real horror stories that happen when all parties on a foodservice project don't coordinate their work. Most kitchen plans start with a space allocated by an architect for the foodservice function. As the plans develop from blocks to detail plans, it is critical that information flow regularly back and forth from the kitchen planner to the architect and engineer. Otherwise, each professional will make assumptions about changes or requirements related to their area. When it is time to build the project, errors and conflicts appear throughout the facility.
15. *Too much emphasis on reducing the budget without realizing the impact on the ability to service the guests.* Good kitchen design is far more than just filling a space with the right sized equipment. It is balancing the production and storage requirements with the investment available. Unfortunately, on some projects, when funds are limited, decisions are made that handicap the ability of the kitchen to function, rendering the facility incapable of delivering the volume necessary to operate efficiently and profitably. Often, an easy "solution" to a project budget problem is to cut equipment or options that lower the cost of labor and energy. When the facility opens, the resulting operating costs stifle any profit potential. Good strategies to reduce a project cost, while still developing a viable business plan include:
 - Balanced reductions in all areas

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of the project scope. If you are cutting the size and capacity of the kitchen, reduce the dining room and seating proportionally.

- Defer items that can easily be added or expanded later as volume demands. Some of the most valuable space in a kitchen may be empty space under a hood or along a wall that allows for future expansion.
- Lease expensive items like dishwashers and ice machines.
- Use quality equipment with lower cost finishes: Aluminum clad refrigerators instead of stainless.

16. *Basing Equipment Budgets on Unrealistic Assumptions.* We all enjoy reading stories of people opening a restaurant with a shoebox space and shoestring budget. Start-up businesses can

sometimes perform miracles with used equipment and inadequate space, that is offset by sweat equity, hard work and creative energy from the entrepreneurial owners. Unfortunately, these conditions can only be tolerated for so long, until everyone involved becomes disgusted with the compromises and the facility fails. When hearing unrealistically low budgets on another project, be careful not to assume they will work for your facility without an understanding of the circumstances behind them.

17. *Cutting too much cost in the infrastructure.* One common way to cut cost is to downgrade the walk-in coolers, ventilators, exhaust fans and fabricated equipment. Unfortunately, these items remain in place far longer than catalog equipment, like ranges and reach-in refrigerators. Replacing core items such as hoods and walk-ins in an operating facility is an expensive and disruptive experience that might have been avoided for only a few thousand dollars of additional investment in the core equipment and systems.

Cutting small items like general service receptacles around a kitchen can be another false economy. General purpose outlets are necessary for

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cleaning and service equipment, tools, time clocks, computers and a host of other support equipment.

18. *Inadequate space for mobile equipment in the kitchen.* The next time you are looking at plans for a new kitchen compare what you see on the plans with photos of real operating kitchens in magazines. Often times, there is no space or utility services provided for the mobile holding and support equipment. A good layout does not fill every wall or area with equipment, but is planned to accommodate the variety of mobile carts and racks that are a necessary part of any work station.
19. *Locating open flame gas ranges or charbroilers next to fryers without a shield or code mandated spacing.* Almost every building code mandates a separation between open flame cooking and an open

fryer to prevent serious grease fires. Some locals will permit a stainless shield between the fryer and open flame appliances, but this often provides an operational barrier work efficiency in that area. The best solution is to plan a dedicated neutral landing space, usually 18 inches in width in between. In tight kitchens or those with limited hood capacity, this space can remain productive when flat tops and griddles without open flames are used instead of spreaders or spaces.

20. *Failure to include a handsink, mop sink, and related sanitation items in the kitchen areas.* Local and regional health departments are becoming much more aggressive about requiring necessary sanitation support in all work areas of a kitchen. While they can be purchased for less than \$200, handsinks are one of the most easily forgotten items on a plan. Providing a single handsink for a kitchen with a dozen employees and multiple work areas is doomed to fail health department inspection. To add a drain for a sink after a floor slab has been poured and the walls enclosed can cost 10 times the cost of providing the sink when planned into the original layout. □
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