

Attractive Kitchens

MICHIGAN STATE COLLEGE :: EXTENSION DIVISION
EAST LANSING

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ATTRACTIVE KITCHENS

JULIA POND—HELEN NOYES

The factors that determine the attractiveness of a kitchen are: color and design of background areas, equipment, curtains and accessory furnishings.

BACKGROUND AREAS

Background areas of the kitchen include the walls, floor and ceiling. Because the cupboards, stove, refrigerator and sink occupy so much of the available wall space they too are classed as a part of the background. When properly decorated these areas are not so conspicuous as the other furnishings in the room.

COLOR

The colors of walls, floor, ceiling, woodwork and pieces of large equipment should be light, cheerful and not too intense or bright. Because light colors are dominant in a kitchen, this will mean that all of the large areas are comparatively light. Even the floor, which should be the darkest, should be a medium value or lighter.

The amount of sunlight a room receives and the exposure should be considered when selecting the colors. Warm light colors such as ivory, cream, yellow, buff and yellow-green should be used in poorly lighted kitchens. Cool light colors such as tints of blue-green, green, gray and blue can be used in any room receiving sufficient sunlight. Because gray is such a cheerless color it is only appropriate for well-lighted rooms. A tint of warm rose-gray or yellow-gray is always preferable to a cool or blue-gray. In addition to the light cool colors, tints of the warm colors can also be used in rooms receiving adequate sunlight. Ivory is always an appropriate color for the walls of any kitchen. Because of the reflection from a gloss or semi-gloss paint, white is not desirable for large areas. When warm colors are dominant there should be touches of cool color to add interest and when cool colors are dominant there should be touches of warm color. The accessory furnishings can give the needed touch of color interest to a room.

A satisfactory floor finish or covering is comparatively expensive and is usually not replaced or renewed frequently. A wise choice may mean years of satisfaction and a poor choice may mean just the reverse.

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The floor should be inconspicuous. For that reason, use medium values of grayed colors rather than bright colors or combinations of light and dark colors.

When the floor covering contains a variety of colors it can be used as a guide in selecting the other colors for the room. Particularly suited in both pattern and color is a marbled or mottled design which contains medium values and intensities of blues, greens, ivories and reds. That permits freedom in choice of other colors for the room. For example, the walls and woodwork for a room with this floor covering



Fig. 1. Note these features of this attractive kitchen: Plain smooth walls and woodwork, simple inconspicuous hinges and latches; floor covering with appropriate pattern, tailored curtains of sheer material, linoleum work surface with mottled design and color interest in towels and canister set.

could be an ivory or cream, the curtains cream with a green dot, the kitchen stool and pieces of small equipment green, and the towels might be striped with green, red, blue and yellow. Without changing the floor covering, the next time this room is re-decorated, rather definite changes could be made in the color scheme.

The walls, woodwork, and pieces of large equipment may be identical in color, value and intensity or there may be a slight contrast. The hinges, drawer pulls, and catches should be as inconspicuous as possible. If they are painted, the same color as the cupboard should be used. Nickel, chromium or brass fixtures are attractive, less noticeable and much more durable in finish than any painted ones can be.

PATTERN

Except for the floor covering, plain background areas are always a wise choice. Small, all-over, inconspicuous, geometric or conventionalized patterns are appropriate for wall, floor and work surface coverings.

Because of the type of work done in the kitchen, a floor covering with some pattern is always preferable to a perfectly plain one. Foot prints, all types of dust and water marks are prominent on a plain floor, while they are not on the floor having some pattern. Also avoid the bold or large pattern, or pattern having a definite diagonal effect. No kitchen should be large enough to have such a floor covering. The marbled or mottled designs are always good.

The pieces of large equipment such as the stove, sink, refrigerator and commercially made cabinets can be obtained in color, even rather intense colors. Because they are a part of the background of a kitchen, it is best that they be either white or the same color as the walls and woodwork. One can find a bright green range as tiring as a brightly colored floor. The colored pieces are often more expensive and less pleasing than the white.

INDIVIDUALITY IN THE KITCHEN

The woman who follows the foregoing suggestions for color and pattern of background areas has many possibilities of making her kitchen attractive and individual through her choice of curtains, towels, utensils, bowls, and other pieces of small equipment.

CURTAINS

Curtains are used in a kitchen to soften or shut out the light, to give privacy, or to add color and pattern to the decorative scheme of the room. There are many possibilities in materials, color, and pattern.

Any material suitable for kitchen curtains should be easily washed and ironed, be colorfast to washing and light, and usually be an open enough mesh to permit the light to come through. Marquisette, scrim, voile, dotted swiss, novelty nets, cheesecloth, and organdy are all materials sheer enough to let in the light. They launder easily. Gingham, chintz, muslin and percale are desirable materials when one wishes to exclude the light. They are slightly more difficult to launder than the more open mesh materials.

Patterns suitable for curtain materials for kitchens are checks, stripes, dots, geometric, or conventional designs. Kitchen windows, if of the correct size and shape, are a small part of the total wall area. For that reason the materials used can be more colorful and unusual than might otherwise be the case. Many times a material of a green or red background is not too colorful, providing it is not unattractive from the outside of the house. Contrasting bands of bias tape, rickrack or other materials can be used to add color and design to otherwise plain curtains. Many homemakers find the plan of having two very different sets of curtains for their kitchens a satisfactory one. Their use can then be alternated.

MAKING GLASS CURTAINS

To decrease time spent in washing and ironing curtains, the straight tailored types are preferable to those trimmed with ruffles. The cottage curtains, with ruffles, are attractive and except for ease in laundering are just as suited to kitchen windows as the tailored type.

The finished curtain should come to one of the structural lines of the window—to the sill or the bottom of the apron. To determine the amount of material necessary, measure the length of curtain, plus the hem allowance. For sheer materials it is best to use the full width of the material. Two-thirds or three-fourths of a width of material, such as chintz or gingham, may be sufficient for each curtain.

It is desirable, in sheer materials, to allow for a shadow hem. A shadow hem is one in which the raw edge is turned in the full depth, making a hem of three thicknesses. With the shadow type of hem the raw edges are less conspicuous before and after laundering. The top and bottom hems may vary in width from $1\frac{3}{4}$ to 2 inches. The side hems of sheer curtains should also be of the shadow type and may vary from $\frac{1}{2}$ to $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches in width. Both sides should have the same width hems. Having the side hems alike in width, and bottom and top hems the same width, makes it possible to turn the curtains end for end and also to reverse the sides. This arrangement gives longer wear. Shadow hems are not necessary for curtains of the heavier materials.

The first step in making curtains is to pull threads and cut material into desired lengths. The second step is to remove the selvages because they shrink more than the main part of the curtain and cause the sides to pucker. After the side hems are turned, pressed and stitched, by machine, the top and bottom hems are turned, pressed and stitched. If a heading is desired, it can be put in with a line of basting. Basting is preferred to machine stitching because it can easily be removed when one reverses the top and bottom of the curtains.

The sheer tailored type of curtains may be tied back or permitted to hang in straight folds. They should be looped back in graceful curved lines. Place the tie-back high or low, but not at the half-way sash of the window. The bottom of the tie back curtain should come to the sill or the bottom of the apron of the window.

The tailored curtains of materials such as gingham and chintz, are usually pushed back from the center of the window so that they hang straight at each side. This permits light to enter and still gives the added touch of color.

WINDOW SHADES

Washable shades similar to those in other rooms in the house can be used at the kitchen windows. Shades of ivory, ecru, cream or light tan color are suitable.

Venetian blinds, if your budget permits, are an excellent choice for kitchen windows. Select those which can be cleaned without too much effort.

OTHER COLOR POSSIBILITIES

Colorful towels, breakfast sets and pieces of small equipment such as bowls, enamel pans and dishes, add color, interest and individuality to the kitchen.

The possibilities of striped, checked or bordered toweling is almost unlimited. This toweling may be used for hand or tea towels and place mats for the breakfast or luncheon table.

Mixing bowls may be obtained in almost any color—green, ivory, orange, dark blue, and red. Many small pieces of equipment may be obtained in colors or with colored handles or bands of trimming.

One small plant will add much to the attractiveness of the kitchen. Too many plants on the window sills give a cluttered appearance and shut out the light.

A calendar is a necessity in a kitchen. One is sufficient. It may or may not have a picture. A calendar with large numerals provides space for jotting down things to be done or money spent.

One other factor to be included among those that make your kitchen attractive, is the view from the kitchen window. An attractive yard, lawn, flower or vegetable garden is much more inspiring than an unsightly barnyard or a yard cluttered with trash. The children's playgrounds may be placed just outside the window so the busy mother can keep a check on the children.

LIGHTING

Proper lighting both for day and night is important in every kitchen. It means that a better quality of work can be done in less time and with less nervous energy.

For proper daylight, provided the background areas are light, the window space should equal $1/5-1/4$ of the floor space. Kitchen windows should be far enough from the floor to permit large pieces of equipment to be placed under them. This distance will be about 45 inches. The higher windows also permit odors and fumes to escape more completely than do the lower ones. Windows on opposite walls that open from both top and bottom will provide adequate ventilation.

Artificial light can be obtained by having one large over-head light. This can be a 100-150 watt bulb shaded with a diffusing bowl. An unshaded bulb means glare and eye strain. In addition to the one central light there should be individual lights placed over or near the sink, stove and work table areas. These may be in the ceiling directly over the pieces of equipment or on the wall above eye level. These lights should be shaded and fitted with a 45-75 watt bulb. Not every kitchen will require all of those separate lights, but the room should be light enough to avoid any eye strain.

When electricity is not available it will be necessary to use kerosene or gas lights. These lamps may be placed on wall shelves or brackets near the working areas in the kitchen. If placed a little above eye level they light a larger area and avoid direct glare for the worker. Reflectors placed at the back of such lamps increase the amount of light.

THE EASILY CLEANED KITCHEN

A clean kitchen is an attractive kitchen. The ease of cleaning depends upon the type of finish or covering used. Smooth washable surfaces are easier to clean than rough ones.

WALLS AND WOODWORK

Kitchen walls are usually plastered and require some additional protection if they are to be cleaned easily. Paint is the most popular finish for plastered walls. The plaster should be smooth, well cured and free from moisture, dirt, grease or other foreign material. New plaster contains free lime which will destroy any paint applied to it. The new plaster should, therefore, cure several weeks before it is painted or the free lime should be neutralized by washing the plaster with a solution of zinc sulphate, then rinsing with clear water. After the plaster has dried it should be painted with a coat of inside flat wall paint, thinned if necessary with turpentine. This coat of flat paint should be well-brushed into the surface and allowed to dry thoroughly before the next coat is applied.

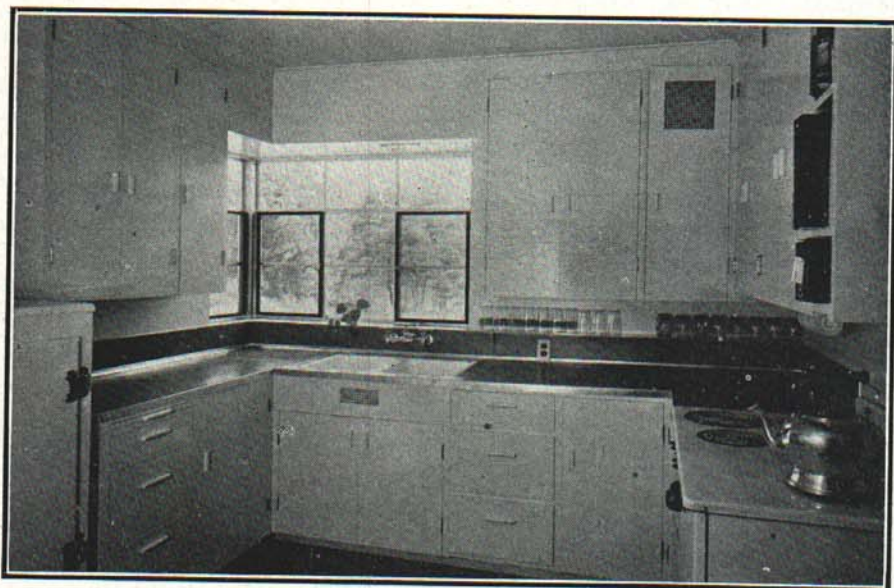


Fig. 2. Simplicity is the keynote of this kitchen. The uncurtained corner window gives ample daylight. Color is brought into the room in the colored linoleum floor and work surfaces.

The second coat of paint should be semi-gloss made by mixing equal parts of flat paint and gloss paint. After the second coat has thoroughly dried the final coat of gloss paint may be applied. It is well to remember that three thin coats of paint well brushed onto the surface are more desirable than one or two heavy coats.

A coat of wax over the gloss paint will aid in keeping the walls clean. Sometimes it may be desirable to eliminate the finish coat of gloss paint and apply wax directly over the second coat of semi-gloss paint.

Other finishes or coverings that may be used on kitchen walls include oil-cloth, tile, wallboard, or a special type of linoleum designed

for vertical surfaces. Oil-cloth is less expensive, easy to apply, washable and perhaps more practical for most kitchens than the more expensive coverings.

The less wood there is to be finished and kept clean, the less time and energy is consumed. Just how much woodwork will be included in the kitchen depends upon the individual but experience indicates that wainscotting is undesirable.

The woodwork may be painted as a part of the wall or given a natural wood finish to match the wood floor. Since linoleum seems to be the most popular kitchen floor covering, painted woodwork may be preferable. Woodwork is painted with three coats the same as described for the walls.

WORK SURFACES

Work surfaces should be smooth, durable, easy to clean and resistant to heat and moisture. Surfaces, or coverings, that meet those requirements are inlaid linoleum, glazed tile, porcelain-enamel, and stainless metal. Inlaid linoleum is one of the most popular coverings because it is relatively inexpensive. The linoleum should be cemented to the surface. Many of the new type linoleums have the adhesive back which simplifies the laying operation. A strip of light weight stainless metal may be used to conceal and protect the edges. As soon as inlaid linoleum begins to show signs of wear it should be finished with a penetrating seal as recommended for linoleum floors (page 10). Glazed tile is expensive and requires an experienced workman to lay it properly. Porcelain enamel is usually obtained only on factory-made tables or other equipment. It is easily chipped, may crack with sudden changes in temperature and is easily marked by aluminum utensils. Stainless metal, of which there are several types, is desirable but its greater cost has limited its use. Paint or varnish are destroyed by continual washing and are not recommended for working surfaces.

KITCHEN FLOORS

Kitchen floors should be selected for their comfort, durability, neat appearance and ease in cleaning. Edge grain yellow pine or fir or any hardwood would be satisfactory if properly finished. Soft wood or flat grained yellow pine or fir are not recommended. Wood floors, if neglected, become warped and wide cracks appear, making subsequent maintenance rather difficult. For this reason linoleum has increased in popularity as a covering for kitchen floors.

LINOLEUM AND FELT BASES

Linoleum is a combination of ground cork, wood flour, gums and linseed oil pressed onto a burlap foundation. It is available in rolls, rugs or tile and in solid colors or patterns. The two types are inlaid and printed.

INLAID LINOLEUM

Inlaid linoleum has permanent colors or patterns for they extend through the entire thickness of the material. It is more durable, more expensive, the colors are usually softer and the patterns more attractive than those of printed linoleum.

Inlaid linoleum comes in three grades according to thickness: standard, medium, and heavy. The thicker linoleum is more durable and more expensive than light weight. Select the grade according to the amount of wear it will get. For the average home the standard or medium grades are suggested.

PRINTED LINOLEUM

Printed linoleum has the color or pattern printed onto the surface with oil paints. Since the color and pattern soon wear away it is less durable than inlaid, but it is also less expensive.

Printed linoleum comes in one weight only. The quality and thickness of the paint and the care it receives determine the length of life of the pattern.

FELT BASES

A material which resembles printed linoleum and is often confused with linoleum is one that has a color or pattern painted onto the surface of a heavy felt paper. These "felt base" products are not as durable as printed linoleum and are suggested only for temporary coverings. It is easy to distinguish between these materials because either type of linoleum has a visible burlap back and the felt bases have a back which resembles roofing paper.

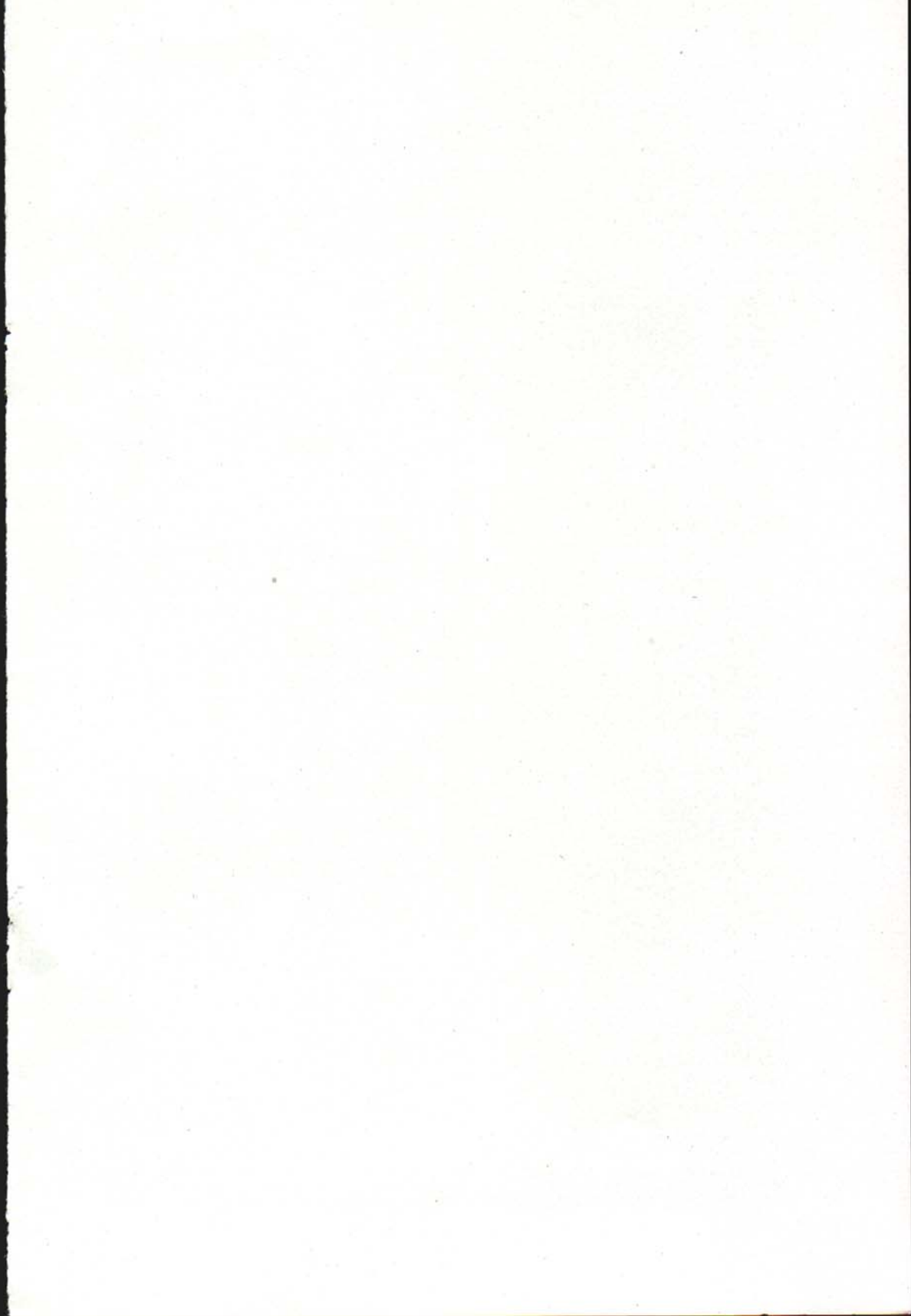
LAYING LINOLEUM

Any linoleum will be more durable if cemented to a smooth, level surface, but sometimes the cheaper grades are tacked in place. Some linoleum has an adhesive back and may be cemented directly to any smooth surface. Others must be applied with cement and are laid over a heavy felt which previously has been cemented to the floor. Either type is satisfactory. Linoleum should not be laid over floors in direct contact with the ground or on floors that are subject to moisture from below. An experienced workman should supervise the laying of inlaid linoleum.

CARE OF LINOLEUM

As soon as any linoleum is laid it should be waxed and kept waxed. If this wax treatment is neglected, the surface of the linoleum will show signs of wear. The method of refinishing or renewing depends upon the type of covering used. If inlaid linoleum has been used it may be protected from further wear by an application of penetrating floor seal. When this has dried the floor should be waxed and kept waxed. Several thin coats of wax thoroughly buffed between coats are more durable than one thick coat. Paint, varnish, lacquer or shellac are too brittle and are not recommended for inlaid linoleum. If the pattern has been worn from the printed linoleum it may be painted an appropriate color and then waxed. Penetrating floor seals are not advised for printed linoleums.

Because of the composition of linoleum it should be washed only when necessary with a warm mild soap solution. Avoid soaking the linoleum and never use hot water, strong soaps, or scouring powders.



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