

# Setting Up Your Kitchen for Cooking

A clean and well-organized kitchen will set you up for successful cooking. Whether your kitchen is small or large, these steps can make the process go more smoothly. You will save time and limit the post cooking mess by following these steps.



## Preparation Space

Start with a clean kitchen that has minimal clutter. Aim to keep counters free of extra stuff if possible so that you have enough space to work on. If your kitchen is currently cluttered or messy, start by cleaning one section at a time.

Find a clean counter area near the refrigerator if possible, with enough space for the items below.

- **Cutting board** – Choose the right size based on what you are cutting. Always choose the bigger option if you are not sure which size is best. Put a damp paper towel under your cutting board so that it doesn't slip.
- **Knife** – Make sure your knives are sharp. Sharp knives are safer since they will cut your food more easily.
- **Dish towel** – Keep a clean towel near you for easy cleaning while you go.
- **Trash and/or compost bowl** – Set this near your prep space.
- **Prep bowls** – Use bowls with lids for items that will be put in the fridge for later.
- **Pans** – Have your pans ready and preheated (if needed) if you are cooking right away.

## Cooking Area (e.g. Stove, Oven, Slow Cooker)

- Stock your cooking oil, salt, and pepper near the stove.
- Choose the right cookware for the type of cooking that you will be doing (sauté pans, stockpot, bakeware, etc.).
- Store your cooking utensils near the stove (e.g. tongs, spoons, spatulas).
- Keep your oven mitts near the oven, away from the stovetop heating elements, and make sure they are completely dry.

## Clean Up Area

- **Clean as you cook** – This will help save time and overwhelm at the end of the cooking process. Make sure your sink and dishwasher have adequate space for new items.
- **Plan when the cleaning will happen** – If you have run out of energy to clean up after cooking, set another time when you will do it, ideally within the next 12 hours

## Putting Items Away

Ending with a clean organized kitchen will make starting the next time easier and more enjoyable.

- **Put away prepped items** – Make sure everything that goes in your fridge has a cover.
- **Put away leftovers** – Consider portioning leftovers out so they are easy to heat up in single-serve portions. If you have more than you want to eat in 3 days, freeze leftovers in 1-2 portion servings.
- **Put away clean dishes** – Make sure everything has a home in your kitchen so you know where to put it when it's clean.
- **Have storage containers and sealable bags available** – Keep a permanent marker and painter's tape in the drawer with your storage containers to easily label and date your items.

