

## BY DESIGN | KITCHENS

# With adequate elbow room, islands can work wonders

By **Paulita Kincer**  
FOR THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH

The key to adding an island to a kitchen is space. If space allows, the island can house anything from a prep sink to a kneading board to an eating area.

"The attraction of the island is that they're kind of neat," said Ron Landis, owner of R.J. Landis Design & Construction in Worthington. "They're different from the traditional U-shaped kitchen. They can be multi-tiered. You can put lots of things in an island."

But a U-shaped kitchen needs to have about 12 feet, 6 inches across to allow for a small island, Landis said.

The U-shaped kitchen, traditional in older homes, needs space on either side for 2 feet of cabinets and the countertop overhang. The walkway between the island and the cabinets should be 3 feet, 3 inches, Landis said. And the island itself can be 2 feet wide.

"Clearance is important," Landis said.

He advises against installing an island if opening the refrigerator or dishwasher blocks the path through the kitchen.

The owner of a smaller U-shaped kitchen can skip cabinetry on one side if an island is essential. Then the kitchen needs to have only about 10 feet of space across, Landis said.

L-shaped kitchens, without cabinetry on both sides, usually have more space for the addition of an island.

Once there is room, the island can be almost anything the



R.J. LANDIS DESIGN & CONSTRUCTION

Whether a kitchen island is small or large, it can offer a variety of uses from decoration to food preparation to storage.

homeowner desires.

The triangle in the kitchen is the essential workspace between the sink, refrigerator and stove — the triune of cooking necessities. If one of those essentials is incorporated into the island, it can cut down on the number of steps the food preparer must take.

When islands first came into fashion, many housed cooktops, Landis said. But because people like to sit around islands, the idea of having a hot surface in the middle has faded. Now islands are more likely to hold a second sink for preparing food or just a big work surface.

Islands can create a barrier from other rooms without closing off the kitchen. So children can work on homework on one side of the island while a parent prepares dinner on the other side. Or guests can sip drinks sitting on stools around the island while the host prepares food.

Landis once installed an island for a woman who baked a lot of bread. She requested a level about 6 inches lower than the standard cabinet height so she could stand and comfortably knead dough for bread.

Another family with small

children wanted a seating area around their island, but they thought the children were likely to fall off high stools. Landis designed an island with a tier that reached table height so the children could sit in regular chairs. Eight years later, the family called him back. They were ready to raise the level of their island seating area because their children were teenagers.

The surface of the island can be anything commonly used on cabinets: formica, Corian, stone. But people are moving away from island tops that match their kitchen counters. They are more likely to choose a different

color or one that complements their countertops.

"It kind of gives it a separate look," Landis said.

Electricity and water can be connected to an island. This can be relatively easy if an unfinished basement is below, Landis said. He cautions homeowners to consider how they will vent a stove if they put it in an island.

*Paulita Kincer is a freelance writer looking at home-decorating trends in central Ohio. Designers and renovators can nominate a completed project for a profile. Please call 614-461-5173 for a form.*