



## KITCHEN

Kitchens have undergone a radical transformation in the last twenty years. Prior to the late 1980's most kitchens were located in closed rooms that were separate from the rest of the house. This was a holdover from the 1950's when mom's place was dutifully at the kitchen sink while dad was in the den and the kids played outside. Fortunately, those days are long behind us and the kitchen is now a place where everyone, or perhaps no one, cooks. Although many fast houses have kitchens that open into a principal living space, like the so called great room, most of these kitchens are actually not very well designed for these more open locations. In a Slow Home, the kitchen is usually integrated with the principal living and dining spaces. It is carefully located and oriented so that it is part of the living space without being in conflict with it. Remember, kitchens are active work areas. Livability is largely determined by a few key dimensions that relate to the dimensions of appliances and work areas and the number of steps it takes to move between them.

In many fast houses the kitchen has become a supersized marketing device with too many appliances and not enough usable counter space. The floor area is usually excessive and forces too much travelling between different uses. Colliding geometries are also commonly found in the kitchens of fast houses. The angled walls and countertops further reduce the effective work area. The primary environmental footprint consideration for a kitchen is the number of appliances. Resist the temptation to have more fixtures than you will regularly use.

### Kitchen

### Slow Home: Rules of Thumb



#### LIVABILITY

- Connected with and properly oriented to the other principal living areas.
- Located just outside of a major circulation route.
- Avoids unnecessary angles in cabinets, islands, and pantries.
- Continuous counters and an appropriate amount of storage.

#### ENVIRONMENTAL FOOTPRINT

- Does not have colliding geometries that reduce effective work areas and storage.
- Is not supersized.
- Avoids an excessive number of appliances.
- Has good natural light and ventilation.

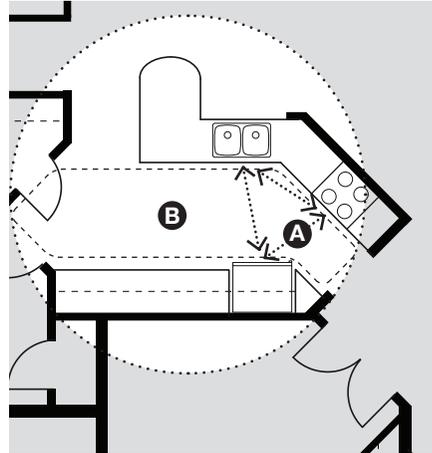
## Kitchen:

## FAST HOUSE COMMON PITFALLS

## 1 Angled countertops

The designed to be sold strategy of using 45 degree colliding geometries to catch your attention is very common in the kitchens of fast houses. Although this can make the kitchen stand out it does little if anything to enhance the usability of the space as a place to actually cook. In this house, for example, the awkwardly shaped counters create a very cramped work area between the cook-top and refrigerator **A** despite the rather generous amount of floor area devoted to the kitchen. **B**

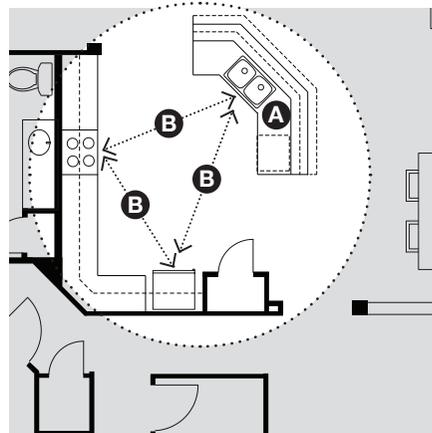
(2630 sq ft single family house, Utah)



## 2 Too much floor space

The typical fast design strategy of increasing floor area to give the illusion of value is particularly detrimental in a kitchen. Counter space and storage are much more significant determinants of a good kitchen than room size. In this kitchen, the island **A** is located too far away from the rest of the kitchen. The result is an inefficient layout that adds too much walking between the various appliances. **B**

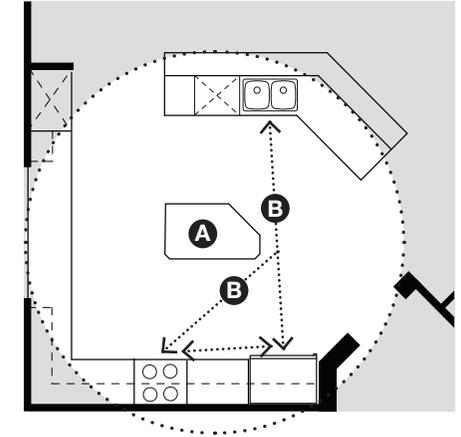
(2226 sq ft single family house, Oregon)



## 3 Double island

A double island is usually an attempt to fix the design problems that result when there is too much floor space devoted to a kitchen. This usually ends up creating as many, if not more problems. In this house, for example, the center island **A** is more of a small obstruction than anything else, adding even more steps in between the far flung appliances. **B**

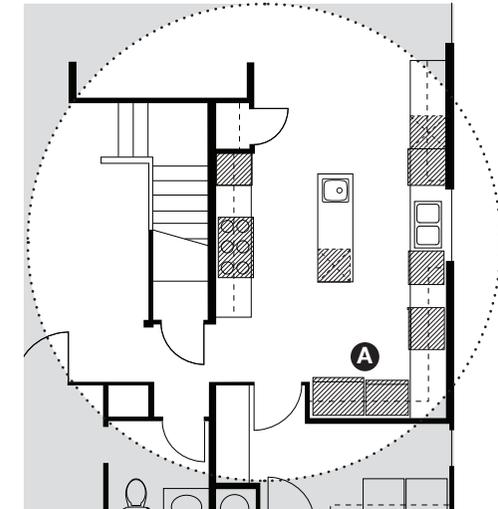
(2551 sq ft single family house, North Carolina)



## 4 Too many appliances

In recent years there has been an explosion of supplementary appliances in the kitchen. Wine coolers, warming drawers, multiple ovens, trash compactors, deep fryers, steamers, and built in espresso stations are but a few. These products can be seductive and exciting but are usually not well used in the long run. Their impact on a kitchen, however, is long standing. In this house for example the considerable amount of wall space devoted to these appliances **A** would have been better devoted to more counters and storage.

(3755 sq ft single family house, Alberta)

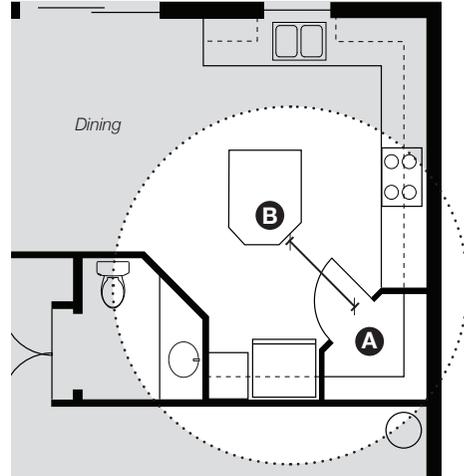


## Kitchen:

## FAST HOUSE COMMON PITFALLS

## 5 Inefficient corner pantry

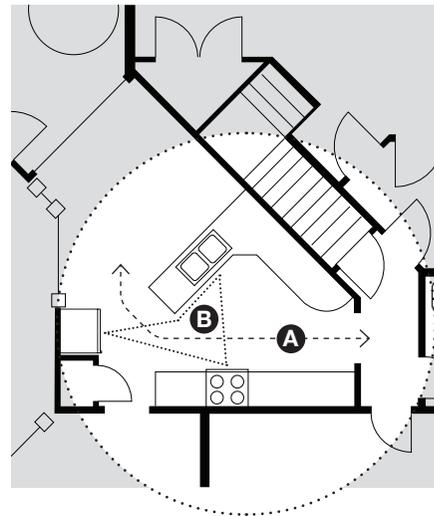
Like the corner fireplace, a corner pantry only gives the illusion of efficiency. Marketed as a way to eliminate a “wasted” corner of space, the 45 degree wall and door actually reduces functionality. The angled wall in this kitchen makes the interior of the pantry **A** too tight and the outside swing door reduced the length, and effectiveness, of the island **B** in order to maintain access.



(2551 sq ft single family house, Florida)

## 6 Conflicting circulation

Integrating an open plan kitchen into a larger living area can cause circulation problems if the kitchen is poorly organized. For both safety and efficiency, it is important that main circulation routes **A** in the house do not pass through the primary work area of the kitchen. **B** In this house, the kitchen feels like little more than an expanded section of hallway, causing problems for both the cook and the rest of the family.

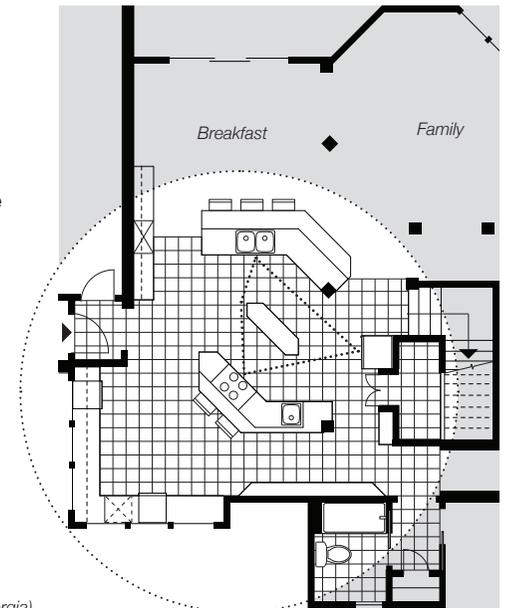


(2239 sq ft single family house, Louisiana)

## THE TROPHY KITCHEN

In recent years the kitchen has become one of the key parts of the house that is designed to be sold rather than used. Supersized floor areas and an excessive number of appliances are seductive marketing tools that prey on our desire to spend more time preparing and enjoying meals at home. Like most designed to be sold strategies, however, the so called trophy kitchen is too often only designed to impress, not actually worked in. The distorted size of these kitchens can make them very difficult to use. This excessive size can also negatively impact the quality of adjacent spaces in the house.

- 1 Too much floor space
- 2 Lack of definition of kitchen edge
- 3 Appliance triangle disrupted by center island
- 4 Too many islands
- 5 Appliances are dispersed
- 6 Unnecessary double island seating
- 7 Lack of focus
- 8 Stand alone fridge
- 9 Fragmented work spaces
- 10 Insufficient upper cabinet storage



(5340 sq ft single family house, Georgia)