



Is Your Kitchen Making You Fat?

by **BERKELEY WELLNESS** | FEBRUARY 19, 2014

If you're struggling to eat better and maintain a healthy weight, your kitchen may be sabotaging your efforts. Researchers have studied the "food environment" for years, looking at such factors as how advertising, packaging and distraction make people eat more. More recently, they've turned their attention to the impact of architectural design on eating behavior and how kitchens and other rooms can be laid out to be conducive to healthy eating.

In particular, researchers are looking at how people store food, where in their homes they eat, what they look at when they eat and other variables to determine what encourages healthy eating and what discourages it. If occupants have to get up and walk through a doorway or up steps to get to their food, might they eat less? If there's a window in the kitchen overlooking a garden, will they be inspired to eat more produce? Other variables in rooms— such as the lighting, air circulation, sounds and colors—can also affect what people eat.

The field of designing "healthy" kitchens— and even entire "healthy" buildings—is still in its infancy. Perhaps one day, all homes (and schools) will be built with healthy eating in mind. In the meantime, here are a few simple kitchen changes you

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- Keep unhealthy foods out of sight (in a top cabinet, for instance, or the rear of the refrigerator) and healthy ones within easy reach (on the counter, in eye-level



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cabinets in the front of the fridge). If you have open shelves or glassed-in cabinets, don't use them to store unhealthy foods. Studies have shown that the more visible and accessible a food is, the higher the consumption—for better or worse.

- More spacious and pleasant kitchens have been linked to better food purchases and increased desire to cook (so you don't have to rely on convenient microwave meals). You can't change the size of your space easily, but you can try rearranging appliances and utensils in ways that make the space more efficient, which makes it easier to cook and thus may motivate you to prepare meals with more whole foods.
- To avoid overeating, don't make the kitchen your hangout. Your kitchen chairs should be comfortable enough for sitting during a meal, but not so comfortable that you want to lounge in them all evening. Save your more comfortable chairs for a different room, away from the kitchen, where you can retire after meals. Better yet, take a walk after meals.



healthy cooking *obesity*

