

designer's eye

Maximize your *space*

Compact kitchens

by NATHALIA HARA • photos MIKE CHAJECKI

A small kitchen can often feel cramped and uninspiring, but with the right design choices, you can transform it into a stylish and functional space. Elevating a small kitchen is all about maximizing the use of available space while making it feel larger and more open. Whether you're working with limited square footage or simply want to make the most of a cosy kitchen, there are plenty of

ways to enhance its aesthetic and functionality.

Here's how to elevate a small kitchen, regardless of its size.

Choose light and bright colours

The colours you choose for your small kitchen can make a huge difference in how spacious and airy it feels. Shades such as white, cream and soft pastels reflect light, creating the illusion of a larger space. If you prefer bold

colours, consider incorporating them in smaller doses, such as through accents such as backsplash tiles, cabinet hardware, or accessories. A bright white or light gray can help open the room up, while warm hues such as soft beige or muted sage green can add warmth without feeling too dark or overwhelming.

Maximize vertical space

In small kitchens, floor space is often limited, so it's essential to take advantage of your vertical space.



Tall cabinets that extend up to the ceiling can provide extra storage for items you don't use every day, such as seasonal cookware or appliances. If full-length cabinets aren't an option, consider adding shelves above countertops or the sink for storing dishes, decorative items or frequently used ingredients. You



can also install hooks or pegs on the walls to hang utensils, mugs or kitchen towels.

Use multi-functional furniture and fixtures

When space is at a premium, multi-functional furniture and fixtures can

be a game-changer. Look for space-saving pieces such as a pull-out pantry, folding tables or a compact kitchen island with built-in storage. An island can serve multiple purposes: It can provide additional counter space for meal prep, function as a dining area for quick meals, and include hidden storage for pots, pans or kitchen gadgets.

Find unique storage opportunities

In a small kitchen, creative and unique storage solutions are essential. Optimize hidden storage opportunities to make the best use of the space.



Being creative is crucial in a small kitchen. As mentioned, pull-out pantry shelves are space-saving storage choices, as are lazy Susans, or pull-out spice racks that maximize deep cabinets. Open shelving is another great option for storing frequently used items in an easily accessible manner. Consider using the kick plate area beneath cabinets for pull-out drawers, perfect for flat items such as baking sheets or cleaning supplies. By utilizing every corner and nook, you can make the most of the available space.

Upgrade lighting

Good lighting is crucial for elevating the ambience of a small kitchen. Combine different layers of lighting, such as task, ambient and accent lighting to make the space feel brighter and more inviting. Under-cabinet lighting can illuminate countertops and add a modern touch, while pendant lights above the kitchen island or dining area create a cosy and

functional focal point. If your kitchen lacks natural light, consider warm, soft lighting that mimics daylight to brighten up the space without making it feel harsh.

Choose sleek, streamlined appliances

In a small kitchen, bulky appliances can take up valuable space and make the room feel crowded. Look for sleek, space-saving appliances that are designed for compact spaces. A slim refrigerator, built-in dishwasher and an under-cabinet microwave can free up space for storage and on counters.

Add personal touches

You can create a warm and inviting atmosphere in a small kitchen by adding personal touches. Consider hanging a piece of art on the wall, adding a few plants for a touch of greenery or displaying unique dishware or kitchen accessories. A stylish rug can also help define the

space and add warmth underfoot. Finally, one of the best ways to elevate a small kitchen is to embrace minimalism. Keep countertops clear of unnecessary appliances or clutter, and only leave out items that you use regularly. A clutter-free kitchen will feel more open and inviting, making the most of the space you have. Store excess items away in cabinets or drawers and avoid overcrowding shelves.

Thoughtful planning

Elevating a small kitchen is all about smart design choices that maximize space, enhance functionality and add style. By focusing on light colours, vertical storage, multi-functional furniture and sleek appliances, you can make even the smallest kitchen feel larger and more inviting. With a little creativity and thoughtful planning, your small kitchen can become a beautiful and efficient space that meets all your cooking and everyday needs.



Designer Nathalia Hara is the co-founder and principal designer for One Group Design + Build, which provides full-service design and new-build construction and renovation in Toronto, the GTA, Florida and New York. onegroupbuild.com IG: @onegroupdesignbuild