Kitchen Clutter Busters

Make the cook’s life easier with a trio of projects you can build in a weekend.

These small projects solve big storage problems in your kitchen—jumbled silverware drawers, inaccessible base cabinets, and clattering stacks of bakeware. We built each one to fit the drawers and cabinets in the kitchen remodel featured in issue 196 (see More Resources). But you can quickly resize them or customize them to fit your kitchen and your storage needs using the instructions in this article. Basic tools and a few scraps of stock will get the job done.

1 Bring drawer disorder to a close

Store-bought kitchen drawer organizers separate silverware—most of the time. But the organizer you design and build works all of the time because you customize it for the size and number of knives, forks, spoons, and accessories you use.

Organizer sizer. Measure the drawer interior and design your organizer’s outside dimensions ¼" smaller to allow for easy removal of the tray for cleaning. Make it just tall enough to hold the utensils. Then decide how many types of forks, spoons, knives, and accessories you’ll store. Make silverware dividers about ½" longer than the longest piece of silverware.

Build to your dimensions. Prepare enough ½"-thick st to width; then the sides to length. Now cut the front, back, and two left-to-right partitions 1" shorter than the outside width of the organizer. All stock ½" thick unless noted.
the organizer. Cut to length the front-to-back partitions separating the silverware. To make items easy to reach, mark a centered, curved cutout on each partition using a compass or fairing stick. (See More Resources for how to make and use your own fairing stick.) Bandsaw on the waste side and sand to the line. Quick Tip: Combine your cuts. Instead of cutting each curve separately, tape together a stack of identical blanks and lay out the curve on the top blank. Then bandsaw and sand the stack to create parts with identical curves.

Dry-assemble the organizer with the silverware partitions and left-to-right partitions in place, and measure for optional partitions at the front or back. Cut these to size and double-check the fit. Then finish-sand the partition parts to 180 grit.

Working on a dead-flat surface, glue and clamp the silverware partitions to two left-to-right partitions, as shown above right. (To shorten clamp times, use a nailer with 1” brads.) To this assembly, glue, clamp, and nail the sides, front, back, and remaining partitions. After the glue dries, measure the assembly length and width, and cut a bottom to size from ¾” plywood.

2 Base-cabinet contents come to you

When half of a cabinet’s contents prove so hard to reach that they might as well be in the garage, it’s time to take back control. Sliding drawerlike trays that extend the depth of a cabinet bring even the stuff at the back out where you can see and reach it.

Organizer sizer. First measure the width of each base cabinet face-frame opening and subtract 1”. Then measure from the inside of the face frame to the cabinet back (usually about 23”). Size the overall tray length ½–1” shorter than the cabinet depth. We designed our trays with 2½”-wide sides, fronts, and backs [Drawing 2]. Build to your dimensions. Cut the tray sides to length and the fronts and backs 1¾” shorter than the tray width you calculated. Cut the front faces ¼” shorter than the width of the opening in the cabinet frame.

Next dado the inside faces at both ends of the tray sides, as shown in Step 1 of Drawing 3a. Then cut mating rabbets on the ends of the fronts and backs, as shown in Step 2. Cut grooves in the front, back, and sides for the tray bottom. Measure between the bottoms of the grooves and cut the tray bottom to fit within the grooves. Assemble the tray and finish-sand to 180 grit. Stain the front face to match your cabinets and apply three coats of clear finish. (We used satin aerosol lacquer, sanding with a 320-grit sponge between coats.)

Now put it to work. Choose the longest slides that fit the depth of your cabinet. To use 22” side-mounted, full-extension slides (see Source), first install mounting strips running from the front to the back of the cabinet sides. See “How to make organizers ride on slides” on page 65 for installation tips. Install both tray-mounted slide parts flush with the bottom edge of the tray sides. Mount the tray in the cabinet and check that it slides smoothly.

Next apply double-faced tape to the tray front face. Center the front face in the opening with ¼” reveals on both sides and above the rail or shelf edge. Then drill and screw through the tray front to mount the front face.

AFTER: SLIDING TRAYS DO THE WORK IN THIS CABINET

Bending and stretching to retrieve contents from the back of these cabinets was literally a pain in the neck!

SOURCE: RL 12-3

FILE: 199Kitchen ideas (12-18)
Tame the cookie-sheet monster

If pulling out a pan from your bakeware stack sounds like a five-car pileup, restore calm to the kitchen with a sliding cookie-sheet organizer built for your needs. Then hide it by attaching a new or existing cabinet door to its front.

Organizer sizer. Make the total width 1” narrower than the face-frame opening to allow clearance for the slides. This organizer’s height can be anything up to the height of the face-frame opening, although we made ours about 4” shorter to save material. Make the overall organizer length about 1” less than the cabinet depth.

Build to your dimensions. Attach solid-wood or iron-on edging to ¾” plywood for front and back panels the width of your finished organizer. Then subtract the combined thickness of the panels from the length of the organizer. Cut the six rails that length from ¾×2”-wide stock for the upper rails and ¾×3”-wide stock for the bottom rails. Now cut the plywood bottom to the same length as the rails and the width of the front and back panels, as shown below.

Dry-assemble the organizer with the rails and bottom butt-joined to the front and back, and drill countersunk pilot holes in the front and back. Glue and screw the front and back to the rails. Now glue the bottom to the bottom-rail edges. Finally, cut slide-mounting rails the length of the organizer and glue and screw them to the bottom.

Now put it to work. Attach slide-mounting strips to the sides of the cabinet as explained in “How to make organizers ride on slides,” opposite. Then screw slides to the slide-mounting strips and the slide-mounting rails on the organizer.

We made a new door for the cabinet shown right as part of the kitchen remodeling, but you can mount an existing door.

All stock ½” thick unless noted.

Full-extension drawer slide

1½”

Slide-mounting strip

Slide-mounting rail

Position the rails to support your flat pans, cookie sheets, and cutting boards. The bottom rails act as the sides of a long tray.

We have no idea why this door had two knobs. They didn’t prevent a pan jam.
on the organizer just as easily after removing its hinges. With
the organizer in place, tape a scrap spacer to the back to
bump the front just proud of the cabinet face frame. Then
place double-faced tape on the organizer front, center the
door on the face-frame opening, and press it against the tape.
Drill and screw through the organizer and into the door.
Then stand your bakeware on edge in the organizer with the
shortest pieces to the outside for easy reach.

How to make organizers ride on slides

Both the slide-out trays and the cookie-
sheet organizer require full-extension,
side-mounted slides (see Source) that
attach to your cabinets. The cabinet-
mounted part of each slide first requires
slide-mounting strips.

For a single-door base cabinet, cut
two strips 2½” wide and plane them to
fit flush with the face-frame stiles, as
shown far right. Screw the strips to the
front and back of the tray sides using the bottom edges on
the cabinet bottom.

For a double-door cabinet with a
center stile, as shown on
page 63, first
mount the strips inside the cabinet as in a
single-door cabinet. From ¾×2½”
hardwood, cut two slide-mounting strips
that reach from the inside face of the
center stile to the cabinet back.

From ¾”-thick hardwood, cut two
spacer blocks to a width equal to the
width of the cabinet’s center stile.
Then cut both blocks 2½” long.

Center, drill, and screw a spacer block to the
center stile at the bottom. Measure
from the cabinet side to the center-stile
spacer block and screw another spacer

A slide-mounting strip allows slides on the
sides of a tray to clear the face-frame edge.

Use Step 1 to dado both ends of each tray side. For
Step 2, tape a ¼”-thick shim to the rip fence and
rabbet both ends of each tray front and back.