
Not Just for Cooking:

Status Making (and More) in the
21st Century Trophy Kitchen

Emily J.H. Contois, MPH, MLA

Brown University, American Studies

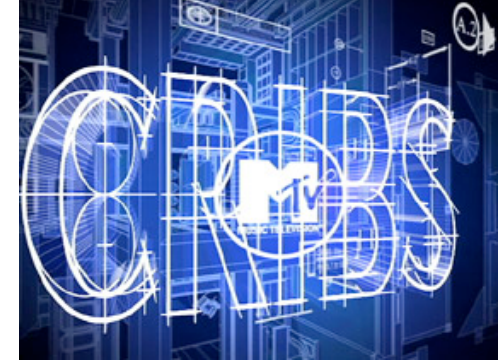
The kitchen is center stage.



(1993)



(1994)



(2000)

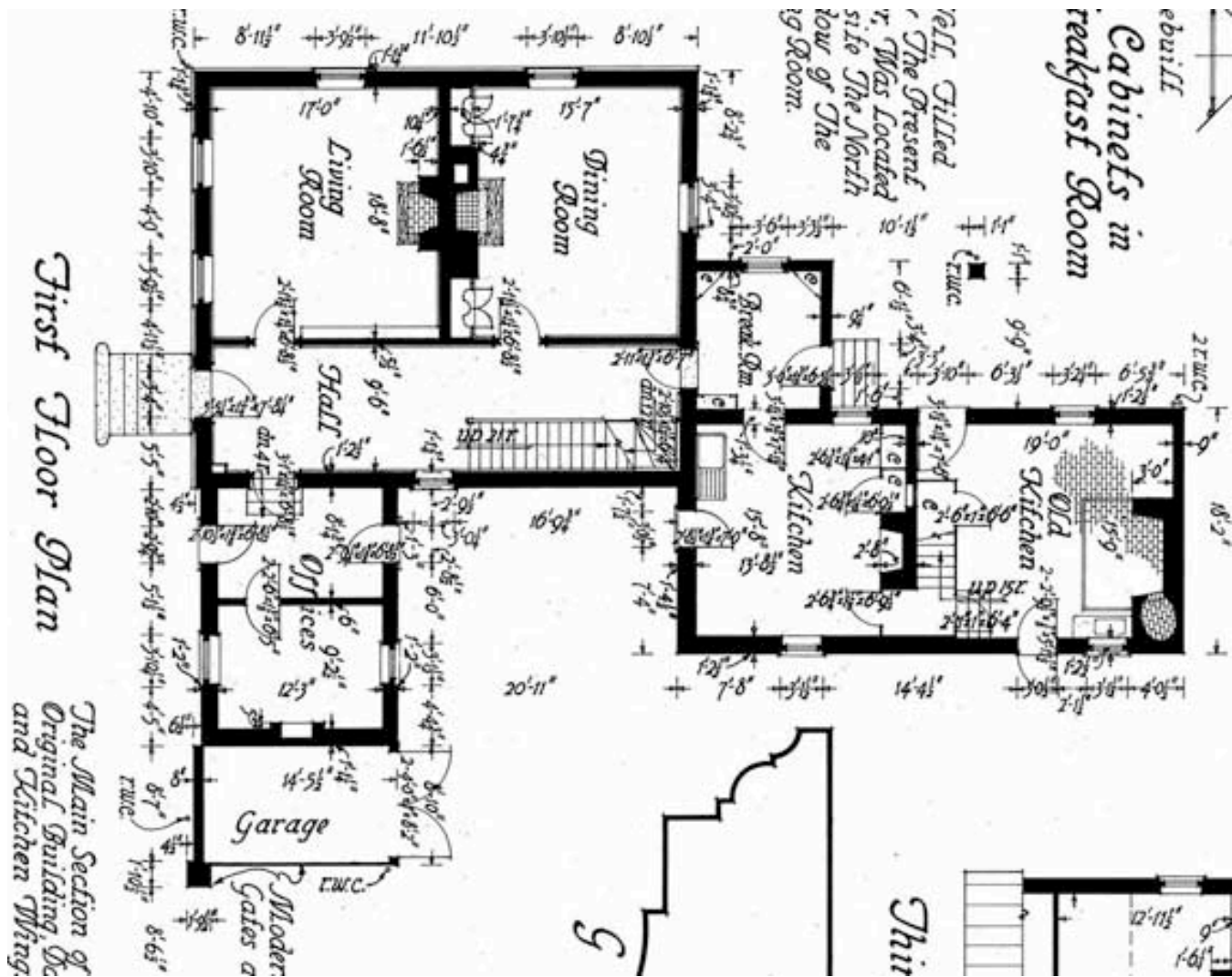


Defining the Kitchen

“ The domestic space where food is prepared...primarily an indoor space, the place where people go to chop, mix, roast, boil, and bake. ”



Kitchen History: Colonial Kitchen
Plimoth Plantation



Kitchen History: Kitchen constructed 1790
Historic American Buildings Survey



Kitchen History: 1924 Model Kitchen
Library of Congress



Kitchen History: More open floor plan, 1953 Model Kitchen

Twenty-First Century Kitchen

- Central hub of all domestic activities
- Combined purpose of multiple rooms
 - dining room
 - living room
 - study
 - Kitchen
- Open and coordinated space

Kitchen Design Books – 1980s

- Robin Murell, *Small Kitchens: Making Every Inch Count* (1986)
- **Focus:** function
- **Images:** food



Kitchen Design Books – 1990s

- Wilhide et al., *Terence Conran's Kitchen Book* (1993)
- Public influence of professional food world
- **Focus:** style and taste
- **Images:** aesthetic display



Kitchen Design Books – 2000s

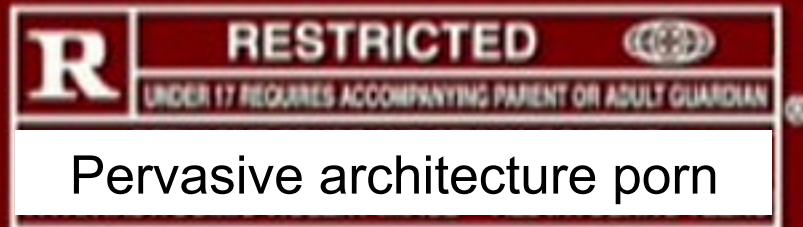
- “The kitchen **isn’ t just for cooking** anymore... [it is] the **true heart** of [the] home...less utilitarian and more **creative**.”
- Home cook as a “**home chef**,” an informed consumer who goes “beyond the basics to build a kitchen that’ s worthy of an **upscale restaurant**.”

Evolving Kitchen Role (1980s-2000s)

- Evolving beyond a space for food preparation
- Taken hold of upper and middle class desires
- Conspicuous consumption
 - The kitchen as a site in which to acquire and display expensive and rare materials, appliances, and décor

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Kitchen Evolution: 2012 *House Beautiful* Kitchen of the Year

Defining the Trophy Kitchen

Large

Open floor plan

Granite countertops

Stainless steel appliances

Dramatic lighting

Multi-purpose space

PROFESSIONAL APPLIANCES

Kitchen island

Central hub

Trophy Kitchen Meaning

- Status and expression over function
- Social space, merging public and private
- Site for future hopes, dreams, and fantasy
- Theater for entertainment and leisure
- Space where domestic gender roles are negotiated — and men perform

Trophy Kitchen Status Making

- Pierre Bourdieu
 - Consumption is the principal means through which **class-based social distinctions** are reproduced.
 - Higher social classes desire products that are **original, authentic, and personalized**, making the kitchen a space for **self-expression**.



Status and Expression: Classic Traditional
Plain & Fancy Custom Cabinetry



Status and Expression: Modern
Modernistic Designs 2011



Status and Expression: Vintage Retro Inspired
Ideas Décor 2012



Status and Expression: Eco-Friendly Personalized Style
Bon Appétit's The New Dream Kitchen 2009

Trophy Kitchen Status Making

- Southerton interviewed 35 English households
- Kitchen quality judgment
 - Working-class homeowners
 - durability and function
 - Wealthier owners
 - exclusivity, rarity, and price of kitchen objects

Kitchen as Status Symbol

“ The idea of having a 'trophy kitchen' is very much the new status symbol. To some consumers, having a certain brand of cookware is just like having a Mercedes in the driveway. ”

Simone Mayer, owner of a kitchen and bath store in Miami Beach, 2000

Kitchen as Status Symbol

“ 10 or 15 years ago, for example, if a bride wasn't into cooking, we told her to buy Corningware so she could put it in her microwave. Today, she might not know a lot about cooking, but she still wants beautiful stainless-steel cookware so she can hang it on a pot rack. It's very much a status-symbol mentality among our brides and grooms. ”

Director of bridal services, Macy's West, Northern California, 2000



COURTESY: LUXURY PORTFOLIO

One of 50 Cent's six home kitchens
MTV Cribs (2008)



“When they showed the kitchens, it was all about the fridge.”

Jill Notini, Assoc.
of Home
Appliance
Manufacturers

50 Cent's refrigerator full of vitaminwater
MTV Cribs (2008)



50 Cent's unused oven
MTV Cribs (2008)

The “Ornamental Trophy Kitchen”

- An expensive, luxurious, state-of-the-art kitchen that is rarely used for cooking
- Possibly a trend beyond the celebrity set
- Cooking Trends
 - **50%** of at-home dinners were cooked on a stove in 2004, down from **67%** in 1985
 - Ovens were used **28%** of the time, down from **31%** over the same period

The “Disappearing Kitchen”

- An ultra-sophisticated kitchen “that reads **more like a bar** than a place to roast a chicken, designed for those who regard the **telephone as the only piece of kitchen equipment of practical use.**”
- “The kitchen has morphed into **a place to arrange the food, not actually make it...** Is it a kitchen, or is it a credenza?”



Kitchen in **In Use** Mode
Darren Morgan design from *kitchens.com*



Kitchen in **Stand-by** Mode
Darren Morgan design from *kitchens.com*



House Hunters: Cara and Adam
“The kitchen was a total game changer.”



House Hunters: Cara and Adam

“I would need [this kitchen] updated immediately.”

Kitchen Renewal Trends



Average midrange major kitchen remodel costing more than **\$57,000**

Top reason for a kitchen remodel?

- a) durability and cost
- b) functionality
- c) energy efficiency
- d) return on investment
- e) appearance and style

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BEFORE: Home kitchen remodel, Sacramento, California (2005-2006)
<http://kitchenremodeldiary.blogspot.com/>



AFTER: Home kitchen remodel, Sacramento, California (2005-2006)
TOTAL COST: \$81,000 <http://kitchenremodeldiary.blogspot.com/>

Trophy Kitchen: Additional Meanings



Trophy Kitchen as Social Space

- “ The house objectifies the vision the occupants have of themselves **in the eyes of others** and as such it becomes an entity and process to live up to, give time to, **show off** to. “
- “ Consumption is most readily understood as symbolic **when others have the opportunity to read the message**; the lack of visitors... reduced [the kitchen’ s] symbolic potential.”

Alison Clarke quoted in Shove and Hand (2005); Southerton

“Islands have replaced peninsulas and are more often at bar height. Their stools welcome visitors as though they are part of the neighborhood pub or martini bar.”



HGTV Dream Kitchen Giveaway 2010
Mann, *Chicago Tribune*

Kitchen as Hope, Dreams, Fantasy

- People made kitchen design decisions for a desired future state “in order to foster habits to which they **aspire**” (Shove and Hand 2005), revealing an orientation toward a future self.
- “The twenty-first-century kitchen appears to have become bound up **with the pursuit of happiness**. The **ideal** of a ‘**dream**’ **kitchen** is a common aspiration.” (MacKay)



HGTV Dream Kitchen Giveaway 2012

Fantastical Culinary Consumerism

- Sur La Table success in selling high-end kitchen gadgets throughout the most recent economic recession: “the **romance**” that the gadgets provide (McArdle 2011).



Trophy Kitchen as Theater

- By virtue of its central location, the kitchen's literal positioning within the home casts it in the leading role of the homeowners' domestic and social life.

Trophy Kitchen as Theater

- Pots and pans dangle from racks on the wall or from ceiling like pieces of modern art.
- Considered a key feature in today's ideal kitchen, the kitchen island is also a performative prop that puts cooking front and center and in easy view of all guests.



Theater: Put on display, cabinet lighting and open-faced cabinets
Capital Lighting, East Hanover, New Jersey



- Touted as most copied and requested kitchen design
- Featured in July 2007 issue of *Architectural Digest* and one of the magazine's most searched articles online

Theater: Film set kitchen
Nancy Meyers, *Something's Gotta Give* (2003)



Theater: Film set kitchen
Nancy Meyers, *Something's Gotta Give* (2003)



Theater: Film set kitchen
Nancy Meyers, *It's Complicated* (2009)



The “dudification of cooking.”
Phrase coined by Helen Rosner, *Saveur*

Gender Roles in the Kitchen

- “Separate spheres” division of labor
 - Women: domestic cooks to feed the family
 - Men: professional chefs in restaurants
 - Women are hired for only 19 percent of chef positions (ROC United, 2012)



More Men Cooking at Home

- Men prepare **1** of every **5** meals
- **32%** of men very much enjoy cooking
- Men make up **35-40%** of Food Network audience



Home Cooking, Gender Perceptions

- A woman who cooks for her family is viewed as **unexceptional**
- A man who cooks is viewed as a **celebrity** within his own home
 - **Food Network:** Transforming cooking from a feminine duty into a masculine performance

Men and Trophy Kitchens

“ Growing male interest in cooking is one of the bright spots in the kitchen retail market. Men tend to have no problem buying a special pan for paella, if the recipe calls for it, whereas women will make do with a regular skillet or pan. ”



Men and Trophy Kitchens

- “ It's only since men have been cooking that you can justify the \$275 knife. ”
- “ The replacement of trophy heads on the walls of the den with glistening granite trophy kitchens packed tight with All-Clad pans and stainless-steel professional-style appliances. ”



Zwilling J.A.
Henckels®
Limited-Edition
Twin 1731
Chef's Knife, 8"

\$450.00

Kitchen Symbolism

- “ The restlessness of society is manifested in the details of kitchen design and décor. ”
- The seemingly ironic phenomenon of the ornamental trophy kitchen expertly communicates this restlessness of society.

Predicting Kitchen Obsolescence

- Turn-of-the-century feminists argued for kitchen-less homes to free women from the burden of daily cooking.
- Since the 1950s, convenience food has developed a plethora of products to make cooking if not obsolete, at least optional.





- IBM punch card recipe file
- Automatic dispensing
- Online TV ordering

Frigidaire's Dream Kitchen of Tomorrow
Featured at the 1957 Paris Exhibition of the Future



The kitchen of the future as imagined in 1972

Harrison, Molly. 1972. *The Kitchen in History*. New York: Charles Scribners Sons.

Kitchen Conclusion

- Rather than shrinking away, in assuming the social functions of other rooms, it has actually become more prominent.
- The kitchen emerges victorious as a social space that communicates self-expression, style, taste, status, entertainment, and hopes for a better future.

Even if no longer being used primarily for cooking, the kitchen still stands as the heart of the home, as it has for hundreds of years.



Boston Globe Magazine, Your Home: Kitchens & Bath
September 23, 2012

Questions?

Email: emily_contois@brown.edu // **Blog:** emilycontois.com // **Twitter:** [@emilycontois](https://twitter.com/emilycontois)

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Email: emily_contois@brown.edu // **Blog:** emilycontois.com // **Twitter:** [@emilycontois](https://twitter.com/emilycontois)