



THE EVOLUTION OF THE KITCHEN PANTRY

Regardless of your kitchen size you most likely have some form of a pantry in your home. This might be as small as a shelf in a cupboard, or as large as a walk-in cupboard. It is where we keep the food and supplies used most often. As kitchens have evolved, the humble kitchen pantry has become an almost indispensable addition to many kitchens. In fact, most homeowners put the kitchen pantry on top of their “wants” list these days. It’s not hard to see why. Whatever the size of your kitchen space, you’ll always need a convenient place to store your groceries. This critical storage requires careful thought and planning, and a pantry to make things easier. The history of the pantry, or kitchen storage, is an interesting reflection of what was going on at the time socially, economically and architecturally.

Let’s delve into the history and see how this space has evolved over time...

The word “pantry” comes from the Old French term “paneterie”. Homes in the late Middle Ages would have had a room/s where bread and meat were stored. In the latter part of the 19th century

middle-class English or American homes often had pantries built adjoining the kitchen and dining room. While large houses in Victorian Britain often had pantries that were separate rooms in the house dedicated to food preparation and clean-up.

Over the years we have seen many different types of pantries. The Butler’s pantry was a walk-in style pantry (which we see making a comeback in kitchens now). It was usually a combination of cabinet space and open shelving as well as counter space. They were usually placed adjacent to the kitchen and used to store valuable glassware, dishes and silverware, and the space was usually managed by the household butler. In more recent times we have seen this design adapted to accommodate small appliances, or be tailored to cooking hobbies or passions, like baking.

The cold pantry has long since been replaced by the fridge and freezer but it was a room designed and built to ensure good air circulation and retention of the cold. It consisted of a cabinet with wooden-slat shelves to allow air circulation and was usually built on the north side of the house. It was used to keep foodstuffs fresh.

The Hoosier cabinet was one of the first portable pantries. It was developed in New Castle, Indiana, in the early years of the 19th century, and remained popular into the 1930s. It was built to serve two rooms in one – the pantry and kitchen. It contained a big storage space and working counter, and soon become an essential in the American kitchen.

For modern homes that can accommodate it, various versions of the butler’s pantry and Hoosier cabinet are adapted to be part of a modern kitchen.

In the 1980's the adaptation of the cumbersome corner cupboard into a pantry with criss-cross shelving was a great way of maximising space and storage of an awkward corner. Modern day door solutions like pocket doors and wing doors have allowed for pantry-style spaces to be adapted for bespoke tea or coffee stations or specialised baking cupboards. Here the doors fold back unearthing the pantry-style unit and then allow for the space to be hidden from view again quickly and easily if company arrives.

With modern living becoming more compact the delight of a walk-in pantry space or designated roomy pantry cupboard is not something all can enjoy. Here we have seen the hardware industry step up to offer clever solutions to give the much-needed storage space offered in a pantry but in a clever, ergonomic way. The 'space tower', 'pull out pantry', 'corner pantry pull' out are just a few of the ingenious modern inventions that we have seen on the market that offer consumers the versatility of a pantry when they don't have the space. Drawer inserts and pull out spice racks also help give the modern kitchen the versatility of storage that the pantry once offered a large home.

So how do we design the perfect pantry? For starters, a pantry should be large enough to hold at least a week's worth of groceries, and close enough to the food preparation area to be easily accessed. Size matters of course, but with the right combination of simplicity, organisation and location, you can easily create a pantry equally as functional as a full-size walk-in. A good kitchen designer will have knowledge of the various offerings our KSA hardware suppliers have available, in order to suit your space, lifestyle and pocket.

THERE ARE A FEW KEY CHARACTERISTICS TO STICK TO IN ORDER TO HAVE AN EFFECTIVE KITCHEN PANTRY:

CONVENIENCE – Your pantry should be located at or near the area where food is prepared.

VISIBILITY – Everything in the pantry should be seen at a glance.

ACCESSIBILITY – It should be possible to remove items without moving others around.

The most popular pantries available to homeowners today are namely: the 'Reach-In' pantry, the 'Pull-Out' pantry and the 'Walk-In' pantry. Let's explore these a little.

REACH-IN PANTRIES

Reach-in pantries are shallow cabinet-style pantries where the goods are stored on shelves that aren't too deep. Deep pantries, of course, hold more goods. If you have the depth, you'd be tempted to use the entire space by installing deeper shelves. This is a mistake that is often made by homeowners. Inevitably, things you use often get pushed to the back as you add new items to the shelves from your most recent shop, so you end up with items you cannot find or get to, without moving all the items in front of that one particular can of chick peas you need. This is a clear breach of effective accessibility as pointed out earlier: "It should be possible to remove items without moving others around."

An alternative to a Reach-In pantry would be to look at having a 'Tandem' internal pull-out accessory where there are internal shelves in the cupboard unit, and shelves attached to the door; so that when one opens the door, the internal shelves move in tandem with the door shelves bringing your grocery items closer to you.

PULL-OUT PANTRIES

A pull-out pantry is essentially a series of 'stacked' shelves that slide from out of the unit. The shelf stack is attached to the door of the unit. Shelves can be accessed from both sides, a move that helps it tick the accessibility box well; as well as the height between the shelves being adjustable. While not quite as convenient as a tandem or reach-in pantry, the pull-out pantry is a good option if your kitchen space is restricted.

WALK-IN PANTRIES

As the name suggests, a walk-in pantry is a small room or cupboard (usually a corner) dedicated to food storage. For many homeowners, this the ultimate of pantries, and unfortunately, a mere dream for apartment dwellers. A walk-in is, of course, an excellent choice for storing large quantities of goods; particularly if you have a large family and do bulk buying. One drawback though, is that if the pantry is too big, it could become inconvenient to use on a daily basis. In this case, a smaller pantry or shelf is recommended closer to the prep area to stock often-used items that need to stay close at hand.

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