Adding Kitchen Storage Without Making It Feel Cramped

Start by looking at how you use the space

Every kitchen has unused potential. The trick is finding it without adding bulk. Walk through your kitchen and notice where things end up. Plates stacked near the sink. Small appliances sitting on the counter. Bags of rice and pasta stuffed into a corner cupboard. That tells you what storage you actually need, not what a catalogue says you should have.

Once you see the pattern, you can plan storage that fits how you cook and clean. A deep drawer for pots near the hob makes more sense than a set of matching canisters on the worktop. A tall cupboard for brooms and the vacuum frees up floor space that a stand-alone rack would eat into. The goal is to store things where you use them, not to fill every gap with a basket or a shelf.

Bespoke kitchen storage starts from this kind of thinking. It is about shaping the space around the objects you keep, not forcing your things into standard sizes. That is why a custom approach often feels less crowded than buying off-the-shelf organisers. Everything has a place, and nothing sits where it gets in the way.

Think vertical before you think deep

When a kitchen feels tight, the natural instinct is to look for more floor space. But floor space is the most valuable area in any room. Once you fill it with cabinets or islands, you shrink the room visually and physically. A better move is to use the walls and the height you already have.

Tall cupboards that go from worktop to ceiling can hold a surprising amount of dry goods, tableware and small appliances. They also draw the eye upward, which makes the room feel taller and less cluttered. Open shelving on a single wall can replace a wall of upper cabinets, giving you display space without the weight of solid doors. The trade-off is that open shelves need tidier habits. If you are not ready to keep every jar and bowl in order, stick with closed cupboards but choose doors with glass panels or a light colour to keep the look airy.

Another vertical option is a pantry unit. A tall, narrow cupboard with pull-out shelves can store a week's worth of groceries in the same footprint as a standard base cabinet. It uses the height you already have, and because the shelves slide out, nothing gets lost at the back. For a small kitchen, this single change can double your usable storage without adding a centimetre of floor space.



Use corners instead of losing them

Corner cabinets are the most wasted area in most kitchens. A standard corner cupboard with a fixed shelf leaves you crawling on the floor to find a saucepan lid. The fix is a well-designed pull-out unit or a carousel that brings everything forward. The investment is worth it because a corner that works can hold as much as two regular base cabinets.

If you are planning a new kitchen or a renovation, consider a blind-corner system. These units have baskets that slide out and swing around the corner, so you can reach every item without stretching. For an existing kitchen, a simple half-circle lazy Susan can make a big difference. The key is to choose a system that suits the width of your cabinet. Too small, and you lose capacity. Too large, and the mechanism jams.

Another approach is to turn the corner into a workstation. A diagonal cabinet with a sink or a worktop cut-out can make the corner the focal point instead of a dead zone. This works especially well in larger kitchens where the corner is not too tight. In a small kitchen, it is usually better to keep the corner for storage and use the space in front of it for a compact breakfast table or a chopping station.

Choose drawer organisers that do the sorting for you

Drawers are more practical than cupboards for most everyday items. You can see everything at a glance, and you do not have to kneel to reach the back. The problem is that a deep drawer quickly becomes a jumble of utensils, lids and gadgets. A good drawer organiser solves that by dividing the space into zones that match your workflow.

Look for organisers that separate knives, spoons, spatulas and tongs. A cutlery tray is the basic version, but a custom insert can hold everything from wine keys to vegetable peelers in slots that keep them upright and easy to grab. For pots and pans, a deep drawer with a peg system lets you arrange them by size and shape. The pegs hold each piece in place so they do not slide into a heap when you open and close the drawer.

What to watch: cheap organisers are often made of thin wire or plastic that bends over time. Choose one with a solid base and dividers that lock into place. It costs a little more, but it saves you from replacing it every couple of years. Also measure the inside of your drawer before you buy. A standard 60-centimetre cabinet might hold a 55-centimetre insert, but a 45-centimetre one will leave a gap that fills with crumbs and clutter.

Hide the appliances that sit on the counter

Small appliances take up the most visible counter space. A kettle, a toaster, a coffee machine and a blender can eat up half your worktop. The solution is not to put them away every time you use them. That is impractical. Instead, create a dedicated home for each appliance that keeps it accessible but out of sight when not in use.

An appliance garage is a lift-up door cabinet on the counter. It hides the machine behind a tambour door or a roll-top shutter, and you slide it forward when you need it. For a kettle or a coffee machine, this works well because they stay plugged in and ready. For less-used items like a stand mixer or a food processor, a base cabinet with a pull-out shelf is a better option. You slide the shelf out, use the appliance on the counter, then slide it back.

Another idea is to build a shallow cabinet above the counter specifically for a microwave. This frees up counter space and puts the microwave at eye level, which is safer for lifting hot dishes. Just make sure the cabinet has enough ventilation and that the shelf can support the weight. A microwave shelf needs to be at least 40 centimetres deep and rated for the appliance's weight.



Make waste sorting part of the design

Waste sorting is one of those tasks that creates clutter if you do not plan for it. A plastic bin on the floor next to the counter takes up space and attracts smells. A better approach is a pull-out waste unit that fits inside a base cabinet. These units have two or three compartments for general waste, recycling and compost, and they slide out when you need them.

The key is to position the waste unit near the sink and the food preparation area. That way you scrape plates straight into the bin without walking across the kitchen. A tall unit with a lid that closes automatically keeps odours contained. Some models also have a small compartment for plastic bags, so you never have to hunt for a new liner.

What to watch: the bin compartment must be ventilated, especially if you compost food scraps. Without airflow, moisture builds up and creates mould. Also check the height of the cabinet. A standard 60-centimetre base cabinet can hold a 30-litre bin, but a 40-litre bin needs a 70-centimetre cabinet or a deeper unit. Measure the bin with the lid open to make sure it clears the worktop.

Use pull-out units for deep cabinets

Deep base cabinets are great for storing large pots and pans, but they become a black hole very quickly. A pull-out unit with shelves or baskets turns that depth into organised layers. You pull the whole unit forward, and everything is visible. No more kneeling and fumbling at the back.

Pull-out units work well for cleaning supplies, baking trays and cutting boards. They also work for pantry items like tins and jars. The shelf spacing matters. For tins, you want shelves that are 15 to 20 centimetres apart. For bottles, you need 25 to 30 centimetres. Adjustable shelves let you change the layout as your needs change.

The mechanism is the critical part. A full-extension runner is essential for a pull-out unit to work properly. It should have a soft-close feature so the drawer does not slam shut. Cheap runners wear out quickly and cause the unit to tilt or jam. If you are having a kitchen fitted, ask for brand-name runners such as Blum or Häfele. They cost more but they last for decades.

For a kitchen that balances storage and space, the details make the difference. Cressbrook Construction works with this kind of thinking, matching storage solutions to the way a kitchen is actually used. A well-planned kitchen does not need more cabinets; it needs the right ones in the right places.

Add open shelving with restraint

Open shelving gets a mixed reputation. It can make a kitchen feel larger and more open, but it also puts everything on display. The trick is to use it sparingly. One or two open shelves above a counter or a sink can replace a row of upper cabinets and create a sense of airiness. The shelves should hold only items you use often and that look good stacked or lined up. Everyday plates, glasses and a few serving bowls work well. Tupperware, spice jars and cleaning bottles do not.

If you are worried about dust, choose shelves with a lip or a guard rail so items do not fall off. Glass shelves are easier to keep clean than wood, and they reflect light, which helps the room feel brighter. Steel or painted wood shelves suit a modern kitchen, while natural wood works in a farmhouse or traditional style. The material should match the rest of the kitchen, but it does not have to be identical. A slight contrast can add character.



What to watch: open shelves need to be fixed to wall studs or solid brick. A shelf loaded with plates can weigh more than 30 kilograms, and if it pulls out of plasterboard, you will have broken dishes and a damaged wall. Use brackets rated for the weight and check them every year for looseness.

Plan for the future, not just today

The best kitchen storage adapts as your household changes. If you plan to start a family, you will need more cupboard space for baby bottles and jars. If you are downsizing, you might want fewer cabinets and more counter space for hobbies. A flexible storage system uses adjustable shelves, modular drawer inserts and pull-out units that can be reconfigured without ripping out the whole kitchen.

This is where bespoke kitchen storage really pays off. A custom design can anticipate changes and build in the flexibility to handle them. For example, a tall cupboard with adjustable shelves can switch from storing canned goods to holding a microwave and a kettle as your needs shift. A set of deep drawers can change from pots and pans to linens and baking supplies with a new set of organisers.

Cressbrook Construction understands that a kitchen is a living space, not a showroom. The goal is storage that works for you now and can adapt later, without making the room feel smaller or more crowded. That is the difference between adding more boxes and creating a kitchen that actually helps you cook, clean and live in it.