



WHAT TO SINK ABOUT

The sink plays a fundamental role in the kitchen - such an important role that it is included as one of the primary kitchen areas around which both the kitchen triangle and dynamic space design is based. Like with all things sink design has advanced over the years. We now have a variety of options available that not only enhance practicality but aesthetics too.

MATERIAL CHOICE: Traditionally sinks were made of porcelain and these sinks still remain popular in traditional country design. But for those of us looking for a more modern kitchen the choice is really between stainless steel and granite composite. Stainless steel is hardy and durable. The best and more expensive sinks are made from 18/10 stainless steel. This handles staining and scratching better than any other grade of s/steel used to manufacture sinks. To protect your sink further you can opt for a satin finish. This has a less shiny appearance and shows scratches and marks less than the highly polished version.

Granite composite sinks are made from a composite self-colour silica resin. The product is hardy and durable and can withstand the same knocks and bumps as stainless steel if you buy good quality.

CONFIGURATION: The number of bowls and how deep those bowls are will depend on how you live and entertain. If you eat out and do little entertaining then there is no need for two deep bowls – a small single bowl should suffice. For those people who have large families and entertain, a double bowl or a large single bowl and additional prep bowl is vital. Deeper bowls use more water but they also allow for the more effective cleaning of large pot and pans and platters. A good compromise is the 60/40 split where you have one larger and one smaller bowl. This gives your sink adaptability. Of course the number of bowls you have is also determined by the size of the kitchen itself. If you have a small kitchen with minimal workspace a large double-bowl sink will overwhelm the space and use up valuable

countertop area. For a very small kitchen a good solution to make use of potentially wasted space is the corner sink.

DRAINER: Most drop in or flush fit sinks come with a drainer. A drainer can be incredibly useful but can also limit the use of the countertop area adjacent to the sink. Should this be a concern you can opt for a sink with no drainer. You can always have a drainage profile or rails cut into your worktops if you are having granite or engineered stone tops. When opting for a drainer it is vital to give proper thought to whether to take a left or right-hand drainage unit. Some sinks are reversible meaning you can decide at the last minute on which side you want your drainer, but others come specifically made to be fitted with the drainer either on the left or the right. Ensure you order the correct one.

AESTHETICS: A standard drop-in sink is easily installed. A cut-out is made into the countertop and the sink can be dropped into place and fixed using sealant and clamps.

A flush sit sink is installed in such a way as to leave the sink profile level with the surfacing material ensuring you have clean level lines. It is, however, not as easy to install. It required great skill from your surface fabricator to be able to router your top correctly so that the sink's profile sits perfectly flush. There are only a few expert fabricators who know how to do this so you should ensure you are working with one of them before embarking on this choice.

The underslung sink is another good choice if you are looking for clean lines but also requires installation by a surface fabricator who knows what they are doing. Here the sinks are adhered to the

underside of the surfacing material. This needs to be done correctly or over time the sinks will come loose and collapse. It is also important that the sink cut out is done correctly. If not there will not be a neat fit of the sink to the underside of the work surface. This means that any gaps will have to be filled with silicone which can become unsightly and be a breeding ground for mould.

Lastly, one cannot forget the trusty prep bowl. This small preparation sink is a fantastic addition to a kitchen. It offers somewhere separate and clean to prep and wash food when your sink is full of dishes. Prep-bowls come in a variety of styles to cater to all aesthetics.

Whichever style you choose it is important that the actual sink is on site when the surface fabricators are doing the cut out. Although templates are usually provided the only way to ensure the sink cut-out is correct is to have the actual sink there as a reference point.



INSTALLATION AND ACCESSORIES: There are a multitude of accessories for sinks. One must first consider their everyday usefulness before purchasing them. They should enhance the sink's usability particularly in a small kitchen. Pop up basket plugs are optional extras with most sinks if not standard. This nifty gadget catches food residue stopping it clogging your drain. It is a useful addition should it not come standard with your sink choice. For those looking to improve their green foot-print a waste disposal unit should also be considered.

Your installation should be undertaken by a qualified plumber. The sink should always be fixed into place with the supplied clamps and the appropriate sealant and silicone. If there is movement once the sink is in use this could dislodge the pipe-work. It is vital to remember that you lose the cupboard space under your sink due to bowls and the pipe-work. It is possible to minimise this loss. Some sink manufacturers supply a plumbing kit that takes the pipework to

the back of the cupboard running vertically to the back minimising loss due to bulky pipework in the centre of the cupboard.

MAINTENANCE: A sink can be a breeding ground for bacteria so regular proper cleaning is vital. For stainless steel sinks abrasive products such as bleach and foods like salt, acidic beverages, mustard, mayonnaise and pickles should be avoided as they can pit and stain the sink. Steel wool should not be used and s/steel sinks should be cleaned with an inox cream. Rust can develop on stainless steel sinks due to iron particles in scourers, water, baking trays etc. If cleaned properly this rust will not penetrate the surface to leave permanent markings.

For a granite composite sink you should avoid anything with a strong alkaline base such as ammonia, caustic soda, paint-brush cleaning fluid and neat chemical descaling products as they can dull the surface of the sink. Although these sinks can withstand high temperatures it is not advisable to place a hot pan straight into the sink. Everyday cleaning should be done with a mild detergent and a soft cloth. Heavy staining liquids such as vegetable juice or dye should be cleaned away immediately. If a mark remains this can be cleaned with a detergent, white spirit or methylated spirits. You should never allow bleach to dry on the surface of the sink as this can cause damage. Lime scale can cause permanent marking on this sink so it is vital to do all you can to prevent it building up on the sink. If there is a lime scale build up this can be removed by cleaning with a diluted mild acid such as vinegar or a recommended cleaner from the supplier. It is possible that aluminium pans can leave a grey mark on the sink's surface. These marks can be easily cleaned off using usual cleaning methods.

Many of the products traditionally stored under the sink contain harsh chemicals like chlorine. These, if leaking or not closed properly can, over time cause corrosion to the underside of the sink. It is a good idea to ventilate your cupboard so any gas build-up can escape.

Your sink is possibly the hardest worker in your kitchen, other than you. Choose it wisely, fit it properly and maintain it with respect and it will, in turn look after you and your family for many a year.

Thanks to Franke, Larson Industries CT, and Smeg for their help with this article.