

A CHECKLIST FOR KITCHEN LIGHTING



Kitchens are now becoming the center for casual entertaining. With the way the economy is now, more homeowners are having people over for a meal instead of going out to a restaurant. Often friends and family bring an appetizer, salad or desert to add to the meal. Everyone gathers around the kitchen island or table as others trail in, so the kitchen needs to be as inviting as the rest of the house.

Many facets of your kitchen design will determine the way it is illuminated. Not only do such variables as ceiling height, natural light, and surface finishes affect the placement or amount of light used, but there are other factors you should consider as well. Here is a checklist:

COLOR: Darker finished surfaces are more light absorptive. An all-white kitchen requires dramatically less light (40-50%) than a kitchen with dark wood cabinets and walls.

REFLECTANCE: A highly polished countertop acts just like a mirror. Any under-cabinet lighting will show its reflection.

TEXTURE: If your end design includes brickwork or stucco, you might choose to show off the textural quality of those surfaces. This is accomplished by directing light at an acute angle to the textured surface. Luminaires located too far away from the wall will smooth it out (which might be a good idea for bad drywall jobs).

MOOD: Floor plans are more open now. Guests will flow from the living room to the kitchen to the dining room. The kitchen should be just as inviting as the rest of the house. Make sure that there is enough ambient light in the kitchen. This softens the lines on people's faces and creates a warm, inviting glow.

TONE: The warm end of the color spectrum in finishes works okay with incandescent light, but cooler colors can be adversely affected by the amber quality of incandescent light. Blues can turn green and reds can turn orange. Selecting a correct color temperature and CRI (Color Rendering Index) that provides a good color of light can improve skin tone and room colors.

CODE: In California, designers must deal with Title 24 (the State Energy Commission's requirements for new construction and remodel work). Today many decorative and non-decorative fixtures are hard-wired to take LEDs; and are available in dimmable versions. California is the only state with such regulations...for now. Hood lights and lights installed inside cabinets do not need to be figured into the calculations.

WINDOWS: Windows that let wonderful light stream in during the day, while showing off landscaping, will become black reflective surfaces at night, unless some thought is given to exterior lighting. Outside lighting will not only cut the reflection of you looking out the window, but will visually expand the interior space out into the exterior after dark.

SLOPED CEILINGS: Even if there is enough space above a sloped ceiling to install recessed housings, special care must be taken to select fixtures that don't glare into people's eyes.

POT RACKS: A pot rack may look just perfect over that center island on the plan, but it's extremely difficult to light a work surface through cookware. If you must have one consider recessed adjustable fixtures to cross light the surface or focus downlight in the center of the rack. There are also pot racks with integrated lighting,

DOOR SWINGS: Make sure that switches are on the unhinged side of a door. Otherwise, people will have to reach around to the back of the door to turn on the lights.

