

Are Our Kitchens Making Us Fat?

It's possible that today's oversized kitchens have something to do with the fact that, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, nearly one in every three Americans is obese and nearly two in three are overweight. The use of the spacious, open-plan kitchen as secondary living space could be encouraging people to spend more time around food than is good for them. Half a century ago, when the average American kitchen measured about 80 square feet and the average American man weighed about 166 pounds, the kitchen was mostly closed off, food was served in the dining room and the kitchen light was turned off after the dishes were cleaned. Today's 225-square-foot kitchen is a place for dads, weighing on average about 191 pounds, to hang out with the rest of the family who can be using the space to play board games, pay bills, watch television or prepare pancakes. Central islands, identified as among the most requested features for a newly built kitchen in an American Institute of Architects survey, open up the temptation to serve buffet-style dinner, and that's "a disaster waiting to happen," says Dawn Jackson Blatner, a registered dietitian and spokeswoman for the American Dietetic Association. "I see about a hundred patients a month for weight-management issues. One of the first things we suggest is that people stop eating 'family style,' where they keep the food out on the island and tell people to help themselves. Rather, we really want people to put one serving on a plate, take it out of the kitchen and eat it in a dining room. If food is in our sight, it will most likely end up in our mouth." (www.washingtonpost.com)

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