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Print this article back-to-back with The Kitchen Clutter Flow Chart for a fun, unique, inexpensive, educational handout.

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Is it *Kitchen* Clutter?

What is *Kitchen* clutter? When it comes to your kitchen, clutter is anything you don't *use, love, or need to keep*. As for the pantry, fridge, and freezer, expiration dates also play a key role! For each item, ask yourself: **Do I use it?** Really? How often? Be honest. If you can't remember, there's probably something wrong with it. **Do I love it?** Consider this: If you love it so much, why did you find it crammed behind that extra set of dishes you also never use, and you couldn't even get to it, much less remember you had it? **Do I need to keep it?** OK, but can you find it when you need it? How *many* of them do you need? **Is it in good condition?** If it needs repair, fix it! If it can't be saved, recycle or toss it! Don't store it broken. **Does it fit my current lifestyle?** Are you ever *really* going to make your own bread/pasta/juice/ice cream/paninis again? If not, those things are taking up valuable space! Or, maybe you're eating healthier now and it's time for some of the food items in your fridge and pantry to go. **If you can answer yes to these questions, wonderful, it stays! Just be sure to store it in an organized manner, so you can find it quickly when you need it. Set up zones according to how you use your kitchen: baking supplies together; dishes near the dishwasher for easy putting away; cleaning supplies separate from food items (hopefully).**

Why can't I part with my *Kitchen* clutter? Here are some reasons why this is difficult:

I still use it. OK, but how often? The rule of thumb for "prime real estate" like a kitchen counter is this: If you use it daily it can stay. If you use it monthly, store it away. If you don't even use it once a year, get rid of it. **I might need it someday.** Yes, you might. If you use it once a year during the holidays, make sure you store it up high, or in a holiday storage bin in the garage. Don't leave it out all year. Think about your available counter, cupboard, shelf, and drawer space -- is there something else you'd rather use that space for NOW? **It was a gift, or I inherited it.** Great, so it's yours to do with what you want, right? Take a photo to keep. **I saw it on TV, or I paid good money for it.** So what? Don't clutter your present with past mistakes! **I really thought I was going to make (fill in the blank) more often.** See Above. **It's still perfectly good.** Good candidates for purging include single-use appliances and gadgets, odd placemats and dish towels, extra sets of dishes, refrigerator magnets (don't get me started!), plastic food storage containers without lids, expired spices and mixes, and pantry items related to ethnic cuisines that you have decided to opt for takeout rather than cooking in. **My favorite charity might want it.** OK, perfect -- bag it up and take it there today! **My friend/neighbor/coworker might want it.** Good! Ask them. Give it to them today. **The bottom line: If you don't use it, love it, or need to keep it, it's clutter.**

What should I do with my *Kitchen* clutter? Easy: Donate, Recycle, Sell, Gift, or Toss.

What if, despite my best intentions, I am still living with *Kitchen* clutter? If a month (or other self-imposed deadline) has gone by since you decided to try to find the *perfect* home for it, or try to sell it, and you haven't managed to do so, ask yourself: Is it in good enough condition to donate to Goodwill, or another default (maybe not *perfect*) charity? If so, pack it up and take it there TODAY! If the answer is no, it isn't good enough, throw it in the trash NOW! If you need help, call a friend or a professional organizer.

Congratulations, you are on the road to becoming *Kitchen* clutter-free!