

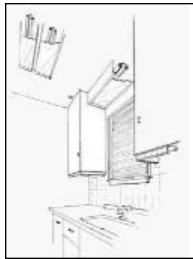
Good Kitchen Lighting

William Lee Joel, II, Senior Lighting Specialist, Richmond Art Company

It takes thoughtful planning to create a kitchen that will be a pleasure to work in – or just to be in. But what makes one kitchen design more successful than another? Many factors are involved, of course, none more essential than good lighting.

What are some of the requisites for a well-lighted and pleasing kitchen?

Starting at the sink there should be a good source of overhead light; this should be positioned above and to the back of the sink so that a person working there will not block the light and cast a shadow on the task at hand.



Similarly, all counter space, cook tops, work islands, ovens and storage areas will need properly directed task lighting that forms “pools” of light over specific areas. To “blend” the pools, we need a general level of overall lighting to eliminate the unpleasant feeling of moving from one hot spot to another as we go from one pool to the next.

Finally, because the concepts of “cooking” and “heat” are inseparable, we need to choose lighting that add as little as possible to the already high heat loads in kitchens.

One current trend in kitchen lighting is to pepper the ceiling with “recessed cans,” a popular fixture style employing incandescent lamping (usually) or halogen (occasionally). Serving as downlights for both general and task lighting, this type of ceiling light is often supplemented with undercabinet halogen mini-strips – small fixtures with a halogen lamp – called undercabinet “pucks.” The problem with this approach, however, is that it is both costly in energy usage and expensive to

maintain. It also generates a relatively large amount of heat.

I believe there is a better alternative. My own strong preference is for a new type of fluorescent lamping, generically referred to as triphosphor fluorescent, because of its higher efficacy (lumen output to watts consumed) and its low maintenance due to long lamp life. Moreover, triphosphor fluorescent is known for producing light that affords viewers greater contrast, less glare and an ambiance of color as it appears in daylight. (For more on triphosphor fluorescent, see our earlier article, [“What’s Good About Fluorescent Lighting.”](#))

For all these reasons I’d recommend the use of simple, tight-to-the-ceiling fluorescent fixtures with wrap-around, high-quality acrylic lensing or, even better, the so-called “skylight effect” fluorescent, both of which produce a clear, clean light for general background illumination.

Over the sink my preference is for a fluorescent “strip” in a light pocket behind white translucent acrylic lensing.

For undercabinet lighting, I would again select fluorescent strips mounted on the fascia board just under the cabinet

doors; the fixtures should face the wall to shine the light back and down for a back-splash effect that will not throw a glaring light directly into your eyes.

Any other work surface that needs additional illumination can be served by adjustable and focusable halogen spots called MR16s; whether recessed or mounted on a track they represent that most efficient use of directed halogen.

With this array of kitchen lighting correctly placed and carefully controlled, a devotee of the culinary arts will surely have the proper functioning environment in which to create a gustatory masterpiece. ■

About the Author

Bill Joel received his B.A. from Brown University with creative design courses at the Rhode Island School of Design. He did further studies in interior and lighting design at the New York School of Design and Pratt Institute.

A professional member of AID-ASID from 1963 to 1993, Bill received a Fellowship from ASID in 1978. In 1992, he became one of the first Certified Interior Designers of the Commonwealth of Virginia. His work experience includes residential, commercial and institutional remodeling and new structures, as well as a number of feasibility studies, all with an emphasis on effective, energy-conscious, quality-lit environments. For more details, consult *Marquis Who's Who in America*. Bill has also served as a member of the FIDER Board of Visitors and Accreditation Committee, Foundation for Interior Design Education and Research; set and lighting designer for the Richmond Forum and Barksdale Theatre; and guest speaker on various radio and TV spots. Bill may be reached at Rich@RichArtCo.com.

