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## Good Buys versus Gadget Overload

We all have a space in our kitchens where devices have taken over. But which ones are actually helpful and which are just taking up space?



Your kitchen is a beach. Gifts, impulse buys, and clutter from merged households have likely washed up loads of items on your kitchen counters and in your drawers and cabinets.

"A lot of times, those appliances that are supposed to make life easier do just the opposite," says Ann Sullivan, author of *Uncluttering Your Space*, and owner of a New York City-based company specializing in home organizing. "Keeping too many devices can cost you more than just space, because you'll pay for it in the time it takes to clean them and move them around again and again."

### The Least-Wanted List

As Sullivan sorts through kitchens, she sees the same unused appliances popping up. Here are her top space offenders.

1. **Juicer.** "Lots of people add juicers to their wedding registry," Sullivan says. "But less than 10% of my clients use them at all after the first month."
2. **Bread maker.** "Maybe you catch a whiff of fresh-baked bread while at someone's house and think it's a good idea," Sullivan says. "But often you can count the number of times a bread maker is used on one hand."
3. **Countertop grill.** "I've seen people who have small, medium, and large countertop grills," Sullivan says. "These can be useful, but you don't need three, and they shouldn't be on the counter."
4. **Electric can opener.** "Instead of having an electric can opener that takes up space on the counter, I recommend having a solid, handheld opener that you can stow in a drawer," she says.

### Five Secrets to Sorting

To clear out the clutter and get your kitchen in order, try Sullivan's strategies.

**Be a gatekeeper.** "To resist impulse buys at home-improvement stores, go in with a list. If you see something you want that's not on your list, put it on your list for next time. That break will let you figure out if it's something you really need."

**Follow the 80-20 rule.** Sullivan believes that 80% of your kitchen counters should be clean, open, usable work space. The other 20 percent can be used for appliances.

**Assess weekly use.** Sullivan advises keeping items you use five to seven times a week handy on countertops. Anything that's used less often should be stowed or donated.

**Empty the drawer.** Open your kitchen drawers and pull everything out. Then, sort the items by categories. "You'll likely find that you have multiple wine openers," Sullivan says. "Pick out the best one and get rid of the rest."

**Store smartly.** Sort through what you have, and then reorganize storage space so you can see everything. That way you'll eliminate duplicate gadgets and make it easier to access the ones you use. For example, Sullivan recommends putting heavier appliances, such as mixers, on low shelves. "To streamline drawer storage, add dividers or trays instead of having an entire drawer full of stuff," Sullivan says. "Keep like items together and designate an area for each category."