

Symposia

HOUSING FORM AND KITCHENS: CROSS-CULTURAL AND HISTORIC PERSPECTIVES

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Preparing food is a universal activity of families and households around the world. The kitchen is the site of these activities and is often considered the center of the home. This symposium examines housing and kitchens in Eastern and Western countries through an exploration of cultural history and lifestyles throughout the centuries. Korea and the United States were selected as the original countries for comparison and study. China and Japan were included to provide a more comprehensive Oriental perspective, while England and Italy were included to expand on the European heritage prevalent in the history of the United States.

Kitchens in Korea

Traditional Korean houses were composed of separate buildings and had various floor levels with the Maru (wooden floor) as the center of the open plan. The introduction of foreign-style house forms from the era of enlightenment, in the year 1876 to the Korean war in 1950, changed traditional Korean houses into Korean-western style houses. More recently, increased population and urbanization have accelerated a change from the traditional Korean house form to an apartment style. At the present time, however, many kinds of house forms, from a highly modernized style with convenient facilities, to a primitive style, which cannot even meet the basic needs of daily life, coexist together.

The kitchen of the old stone age to the Koryo Dynasty was categorized into six categories: the Beginning Period of the Kitchen, the Period of the Primitive Kitchen, the Formative Period of the Kitchen, the Enlargement Period of the Kitchen, the Separation Period of the Kitchen, and the Beginning of the Traditional Kitchen.

The kitchen in the traditional Korean houses from the Chosun Dynasty (1392) had no plumbing, drainage, or work centers. They had simple adobe furnaces which were used for heating the ondol (a panel-heated floor by which the heat and smoke run

under the floor to the chimney). This made the kitchen floor lower than the floors of other spaces. The residents entered the kitchen through the madang (atrium). The influence of the western-style kitchen, the development of technology, and nation-wide economic improvements have made today's kitchen space convenient and hygienic. The floor level of the kitchen was raised to the same level as other spaces. Formerly the major function of the kitchen space was cooking and heating floors. This has changed, and the kitchen is now a place for family and social interaction.

Kitchens in Japan

The housing forms in ancient Japan were divided into warrior housing, merchant housing, and peasant housing, and kitchen types varied accordingly. In the modern age, the types of kitchens have become similar. Originally, Daidokoro (kitchens in Japanese) had indicated the place for setting food. In later periods, Daidokoro started to signify the cooking area of high-class housing. The traits of the traditional farmhouse included a mud floor area with Kamado (hearth) for cooking and wooden floor room for dining. Larger houses had a wooden floor room for simple cooking and dining with an Irori (open hearth). In the residence of the higher warrior class, cooking hearths were placed in the wooden floor room, and males participated in cooking.

The biggest change in traditional kitchen forms was the modernization which came with the Meiji restoration. The major change at that time was in the family dining patterns, which went from dining in an individual's Jen to dining on one low table with family members. Since the 20th century, kitchens changed drastically due to several factors. There was a kitchen improvement movement in the 1910s, and modern facilities, such as electricity, gas, and piped water, were diffused throughout society. The diffusion of new ideas was especially rapid among urban white-collar families. Apartment living, improved appliances, and use of chairs created a new lifestyle among these families. The kitchen in Japan today has a very similar appearance to those anywhere in the West or East.

Kitchens in China

There are 32 different types of vernacular buildings in China, but the Sa-hab-won is the main type of Chinese house. Other types belong to different ethnic groups. The kitchens of this house type were studied using a survey conducted in the Beijing area. The plan, location, physical setting, furniture, and other functions of the kitchen were explored.

Sa-hab-won has many variations. The plan of the kitchen is of the standing style and includes a cooking stove, deep frying pan, basin for washing dishes, a kitchen cabinet, and a big pot of water. The kitchen is usually on the opposite side of the main entrance, at the very end of the inner house. In the farmhouse it is attached to the main

house, so that it can be a multi-purpose space for the family. In the northern part of China it is common that the heating and cooking is combined, so that during the winter all of the family can gather together around the fireplace.

Kitchens in Italy

Italy has gone through many changes as acceptance of different cultures has influenced the country throughout the Roman, Medieval, and Renaissance periods. In the Roman period, the house was developed around the Domus plan that had a courtyard, atrium, and peristylum. This atrium house became the common style among the upper class; its central nucleus was formed by a large opening in the center and a basin to gather rain water. Rooms were situated around the atrium and the house appeared completely closed from the outside. Many of the houses of the upper class had a second story where the servants' quarters were located. The kitchen area was close to the servants' quarters at the rear of the house and contained an oven, equipment for making pasta, a wine press, and a pantry. By the 16th century, standardization of the house was beginning in Italy, although arrangements for cooking have developed very slowly. By the end of the 19th century, the development of electric equipment allowed Italian kitchens to become mechanized.

Kitchens in England

In England during the medieval age, kitchens in rural houses were multi-purpose rooms combined with living and dining areas, located at the center of the house. The "great hall" opened toward the second floor. In houses in towns the kitchen was placed at the back of the house, on the ground floor.

In the 1700s, the Georgian terrace home was developed and constructed for the upper class in London. The kitchens in these homes were located on the basement level, next to a pantry, wine storage area, and a laundry.

After the industrial Revolution, the organization of domestic space was rearranged, so that the kitchen was relocated from the basement to the ground floor. Cooking conditions improved. Before 1850, coal had been the main energy source for heating and cooking, but by 1880 the gas stove had been introduced. Two-bowl sinks using hot and cold water were available, and a big pantry space for refrigeration had been planned.

The prevalence of servants for housework in the British home has slowed the development and adoption of kitchen appliances. Since 1910 the gas range has been in general use in London homes, without significant changes,

Kitchens in the United States

In smaller homes of colonial America, the woman of the family prepared meals using a fireplace for cooking and a wooden table as a work surface. While equipment was similar in larger homes, servants prepared and served meals. Early large homes typically had the kitchen located in the basement, but in later periods the kitchen was moved to a separate building to reduce heat and smoke in the home and to alleviate fire hazards. In the last half of the 19th century changes in kitchen design were recommended by Catherine Beecher in her book *The American Woman's Home*. To encourage more economical work processes in the kitchen, she recommended continuous work surfaces and storage at point of use. A better-designed kitchen would allow more homes to operate without servants and would eventually free women to pursue interests and occupations outside the home.

In the 20th century, electrification and the development of electric equipment allowed the American kitchen to become mechanized. In-home refrigeration improved food preservation, and cabinetry was developed to popularize the continuous work surface. Minimum property standards required standardized kitchens in new homes being built, and in the latter half of the 20th century many specialized appliances became common. Awareness of an aging population as well as concerns for functional and attractive designs have sparked an interest in universally designed kitchens, and the functional aspects of kitchen spaces and equipment will continue to be of concern in the future.

Conclusions

Today kitchens and houses in these and other diverse cultures have become similar in many ways. Appliances and cabinetry are marketed worldwide and reflect the homogeneity of technology and globalization. Issues of aging and special needs have promoted universal and functional design. However, in each country unique kitchens are created that reflect the culture and heritage of the people who live and work in them.