

Innovation in Church Kitchens

Reuben Kuah, architect with Studio B recently designed a new kitchen as part of his redevelopment of a warehouse into his own church, Reach Church in Northcote. This challenges some of the traditional understanding of church kitchens and succeeds on many levels, serving meals for up to 250 people. How does this work?

An efficient, L-shaped kitchen layout sits behind a large sliding door with translucent polycarbonate panelling. Stored in behind the sliding door are several stainless steel trolleys on wheels. When not in use the sliding door is locked. The kitchen is located on the edge of a large meeting room/foyer space between the main entry doors and the church auditorium. This room has a freestanding drinks bench with sink within the space.



Before a typical service, some members will bring precooked food and leave it on one of the trolleys located outside the kitchen. If more will be required to serve the congregation after the service, this is cooked during the service by the team. The kitchen layout has been carefully planned for the sequential process of food preparation.

At the conclusion of the service trolleys are used in two locations; outside the kitchen within the meeting room and alongside the drinks counter for the service of food. Two lines of people form, enabling food to be distributed much more efficiently than at a single servery.

After the meal, dishes are placed in receptacles at both trolley locations and these are wheeled back into the kitchen area for wash-up and storage. Again there is a natural flow for the wash, including dishwasher and storage for crockery and cutlery.

This has benefits on a number of levels:

- The kitchen is relatively small for the number of people being served. This saves on construction cost and is easier to clean.
- The separated drinks bench provides for hospitality at other events when no meals are served.
- Meals are served to the people more quickly than at a single servery.
- The overall space is used efficiently.

What about safety with only a large sliding door open between the kitchen and the area where children may be running around? This is managed in two ways. Firstly when food is being served the trolleys are located across the front of the kitchen, blocking access. Secondly children are instructed not to enter the church kitchen and kept under parental control as they would be in any potentially dangerous situation.

This facility is now used on several occasions during the week in addition to Sundays.

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