



Seating: A recessed area for stools is a must have.

Cooking vs. Cleanup: If kitchen size requires one activity to happen at the island, cooking wins. Usually people want the sink below a window and the dishwasher near some cupboards. And you will want to be facing guests while cooking, not while wrestling dirty dishes.

A good view: Guests want to see what's going on in the kitchen, Cooks want to see what's going on around the TV or out on the patio. Pulling a kitchen wall down can make room for an island that opens to an adjoining room.

Extra cabinet storage and counter space: Duh!

Counter-top all at one level: Between food prep, homework, and hors d'oeuvres, a generous, continuous workspace rules the day.

Beauty: Folks see the island as a place to show off their style, be it carved furniture legs or modern "waterfall" ends.

Contrast: The cabinetry might be a different wood species or paint color than the rest of the kitchen. And a contrasting counter might provide some visual pop.

Good, fun lighting: This is often the spot that gets the "feature" pendants or track lighting hanging from the ceiling.

Extra prep sink and room for a kitchen helper.

Microwave drawer: Though expensive, this appliance can be a good alternative when kitchen wall space is devoted to cabinets and main appliances.

Below-counter refrigerator for wine and beverages: This can take some of the load off the main fridge and bolster the island's role as an entertainment hub.

End shelves for display, cookbooks, etc.

Roll-out shelf below the counter for a heavy mixer: This is one of the few places, other than at sinks, where I use cabinet doors. The goal here is a short lift of the mixer onto the counter directly above.