

**cooking habits**

**architecture**

**Poland XXI century**

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# The correlation between our cooking habits and the way we shape our homes - Poland, for the year 2024.

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## INTRODUCTION

I still remember the smell of chicken soup cooked by my grandmother every Sunday morning. She worked alone in the kitchen from 7:00 a.m., preparing a meal for the whole family—a ritual.

For at least the last 50 years, we have witnessed dramatic changes in cooking habits within Polish and European society. These changes have been influenced by our perceptions of family, new cooking technologies, the affordability of eating out, and substitutes for home-cooked meals, such as ready-to-eat lunch boxes in supermarkets. This shift has led to significant changes in our perception of food prepared at home. Initially seen as a necessity and an everyday ritual, it later became a hobby for those talented in cooking.

Now, in the era of highly processed food and a fast-paced life with little time for healthy eating, self-prepared dinners have become glorified as a luxury. Those who can cook are often mythologized for their secret knowledge and exceptional skills, which, in the past, were common requirements for survival.

The Industrial Revolution brought us more than just the steam engine; it marked the beginning of a new era in which women were no longer full-time housewives. The middle class began to grow, and the concept of efficiency spread from factories to our everyday lives and homes. Women found themselves navigating a world where they had to balance caring for the house and children with full-time jobs<sup>1</sup>. Titles such as “Household Engineering” by Christine Frederick emerged in search of solutions.

We live in a world that, in terms of industrial and technological advancement, is far more complex than the one at the beginning of the 20th century. Larders have transformed into shelves of highly processed food, hours spent cooking have been replaced by pressure cookers, and family dinners have shifted to ordering pizza with friends. What do the words “kitchen” and “cooking” truly mean for today’s society?

## RESEARCH METHOD

This research aims to provide insights into the correlation between cooking habits and the spaces we call home. A specific analytical framework has been implemented:

Each section of the article is dedicated to a particular household, accompanied by a brief description of the person’s context. Following this, the article includes a floor plan of the apartment, reconstructed by the author to depict the furniture and other kitchen and living space utilities, ensuring the floor plans are coherent and relevant to the content. A photograph of the cooking area is also included, offering a glimpse into everyday life in that space.

Additionally, every participant was asked to complete a form prepared by the author for this specific research. The questions explored aspects such as individual storage space needs, satisfaction with the cooking area, and cooking habits.

By carefully analyzing the space, context, and information provided in the forms, we aim to reveal the correlation between cooking habits and the ways we shape our homes in a three-dimensional view, recognizing the interdisciplinary connections involved. The order of the sections is based on the year of construction, starting from the oldest to the newest.

## Tkaczyk's apartment. Sandomierz, Poland.

2-person household  
year of construction: 1970  
25 m<sup>2</sup>

Figure 1. Photograph of the kitchen in Tkaczyk's apartment.



### Apartment's context

The apartment is located in a city with a population of 30,000 in southeastern Poland. The design for this five-story building aimed to provide affordable and quick housing for the people who worked in the factories around the city. It was constructed using "big board" (Polish: "wielka płyta"), adhering to modernist principles. The fact that Poland was a communist country at that time plays a crucial role in the decision to include an open staircase, which occupies almost half of the entire building on the floor plan. The shape of the staircase also allows neighbors to see into each other's private spaces, as every part is fully shared with the community. The lack of privacy is also evident in the thickness of the walls, which is likely a side effect of the small budget allocated for the building's construction. In summary, it was the fastest, cheapest, and most economical solution to the housing crisis that arose during that time.

### Person's context

The apartment is home to a couple in their 70s. Their daily schedule is mostly dependent on doctor's visits and other health-related activities. They spend weekends primarily outside the home, visiting family.

### Floor plan analysis

Currently, the apartment has the layout of a small studio. In the original floor plan, the kitchen was located in a small room with one door and a glass window facing the living room. The glass and doors separating these two rooms were placed to prevent cooking smells from spreading and to separate the living area from the cooking space<sup>2</sup>. At that time, the concept of an open

kitchen was still not widely known, as it only began to gain popularity in the 1980s in the U.S. and Western Europe. The bathroom contains a washing machine, bathtub, and toilet. The only source of daylight is located next to the balcony facing south. The living room serves as the dining space, bedroom, and storage area. The hallway from the front door to the kitchen occupies approximately 2.5 square meters.

### Kitchen analysis

With the renovation, the glass window was replaced with an empty opening that features a thin bar table. The oven, previously located on the wall shared with the bathroom,

Figure 2. Tkaczyk's apartment floor plan.



is now part of a shelving system that occupies two adjacent walls. The kitchen itself is a space of 3.4 square meters, which includes a gas-powered stove and oven combination with a hood above, a sink, a trash bin, and a small fridge with a refrigerator shelf inside.

### Cooking Habits

In this household, more than three meals are prepared each day. For one person cooking for two, this takes over two hours. The most frequently prepared dish is meat sauce with sides, chosen for its quick preparation time and relative healthiness. This household orders food to be delivered and eats out once a month or less.

### Correlation

Currently, the kitchen space is not satisfactory for the inhabitants. The main problem is the lack of storage and the very limited space for cooking comfortably. Another issue is the absence of a dishwasher, which may lead to a preference for one-pot meals, as they require less space and fewer dishes. The kitchen lacks any source of natural daylight, forcing the occupants to rely on artificial lighting for most of the day. The limited space in the cooking area influences their choice of quick and easy-to-prepare dishes. While health considerations are certainly important to the occupants, the kitchen does not accommodate recipes that require multiple pots or ample workspace. The overall lack

of satisfaction may also stem from poorly situated facilities, such as a sink in the corner and an oven that must be opened while standing at an awkward angle<sup>3</sup>. Storage is another issue; as seen in the picture, many products are left on the counter, taking up space that could be used for meal preparation.

To enhance hygiene and create an efficient space, a window in the kitchen should be considered, not only for its beneficial effects on well-being but also for energy efficiency. Since the occupants are elderly, functionality is crucial; the shelving system should be placed at an easily accessible height, which is not the case in this unit, creating an unsafe environment<sup>4</sup>.

## Chmura's family house. Andruszkowice, Poland.

6-person household  
year of construction: 1984  
286,5m<sup>2</sup>

Figure 3. Photography of the kitchen in Chmura's family house.



### Apartment's context

The house is located in a small village in southeastern Poland. It was constructed in 1984 as a standalone family home with five bedrooms, two living rooms, and two kitchens, one of which was intended for use only during large family events like Christmas. The building was made using perforated clay bricks. Like many village houses of that era, the ground floor was designed to include spaces such as a larder, basement, wood storage room, boiler room, and garage. In addition to serving as a family residence, the house was also a place for village work and tool storage. In the original plan, the kitchen that is now the only one in use was designated for cooking for farm animals and for preparing the slaughtered animals for consumption.

## Person's Context

This household is multigenerational and rooted in traditions where family plays a very important role. The person interviewed is responsible for managing life within the house. Everyone has specific habits and schedules, but the main meal of the day is the time when everyone gathers together. The men in the family do not cook, as there are many other chores in the village where they are more efficient than the women.

## Floor plan Analysis

The house has two entrances: one facing the private yard, located next to the kitchen, which also serves as the “supplier’s entrance” typical of house floor plans from the early 20th century, and the front door, which is the respectable entrance for guests and other visitors<sup>5</sup>. The ground floor is designed for communal use, meaning there are no bedrooms or private spaces located there. The kitchen occupies 9 square meters, which, compared to the total floor size of 95.5 square meters, can be considered relatively small for such an important part of the home. The spacious living room features a large dining table, sofas, and armchairs, along with plenty of windows. The bathroom, equipped with a sink and bathtub, is located next to a small basement where some food products are stored. The other food preserves are kept in the larder, centrally located in the floor plan, serving as a walk-through room between the

garage and boiler room, making the transport of food from the car to the larder easy and efficient.

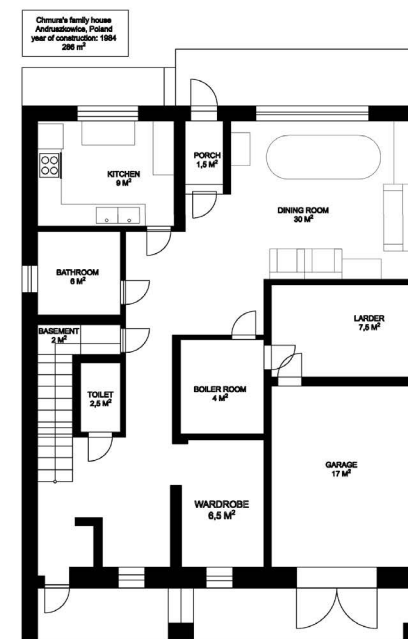
## Kitchen Analysis

The kitchen is designed as a closed space, completely separate from the living room. This layout reflects the idea of an alienated kitchen, where those working in the kitchen are not interacting with family members eating in the living room. Windows on the east-facing wall allow for bright morning light. A large fridge is positioned next to the gas stove, while the working table also serves as a dining table for single meals. The opportunity to eat breakfast at the table while looking outside is noted as the best aspect of the kitchen.

## Cooking Habits

According to the form, it usually takes two people to prepare dinner for the six-person household, which takes more than two hours each day. Homemade cakes and baked goods like bread or meat are prepared frequently, making the oven one of the most important necessities in the kitchen. The household’s lifestyle is largely dictated by the specific time of year and the hours of the day. For example, during the summer harvest, mornings begin around 5 a.m. with breakfast, and the person who cooks returns from the fields to prepare the main meal of the day, typically served between 1 and 2 p.m. This meal usually includes a

Figure 4. Chmura’s family house floorplan.



soup and a second dish. After the meal, everyone returns to work. The evening meal is generally a solitary affair, with each person preparing food at their own convenience. A significant day in this household, rooted in Christian culture, is Sunday, which is dedicated to family gatherings featuring traditional dishes like chicken soup, the most frequently prepared meal in the household.

## Correlation

The kitchen is relatively small considering the number of people living and eating in the house. The person noted a preference for cooking alone, likely stemming from the discomfort of sharing the limited cooking space with others.

In this household, the kitchen is the mysterious heart of the home, where the magic of shared family meals is created. Due to its size, the kitchen feels intimate and embodies a sense of cohabitation, where everyone’s needs must be visible and accommodated. The east-facing window makes mornings in the kitchen significant and vibrant, aligning with the household’s morning routine. However, there is not enough space for everyone to participate in the cooking experience together.

## Tkaczyk-Zdziechowski's apartment. Kraków, Poland.

3-person household  
year of construction: 2004  
49m<sup>2</sup>

Figure 5. Photograph of the kitchen in Tkaczyk-Zdziechowski's apartment.



### Apartment Context

The apartment building is part of an estate located in one of the largest cities in Poland. Around that time, the urbanization rate in Poland was one of the highest in its history, leading to significant investments in expanding residential areas. This apartment is situated in a five-story accommodation block with garage spaces and storage rooms located in the building's cellar. The main walls are constructed using reinforced concrete, which helps contain sound within the apartment, providing more privacy from neighbors next door. The hallway is 3 meters wide and features several landings, each with entrances to the apartments. Daylight enters the apartment only from the south side, where a long row of windows and a balcony are located.

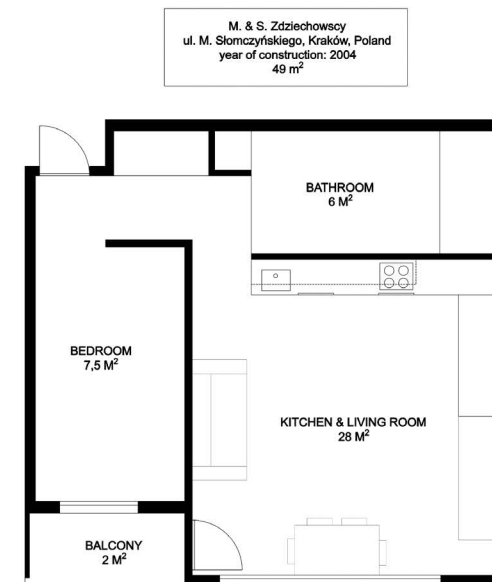
### Person's Context

The household consists of parents and their daughter. Both parents work full-time, from 9 to 5, while their daughter attends school. Life in the apartment is busy and typically begins after 5:00 PM when everyone is home. This time is focused on resting, eating dinner prepared the day before, and cooking for the next day's work and school lunches. Weekends are reserved for leisure activities such as biking, sightseeing, cleaning the apartment, and meeting friends. This modern family leads a busy city life, with relatively little free time after working hours.

### Floor plan Analysis

The apartment encompasses 49 square meters, featuring one bathroom, one bedroom, and an open kitchen that faces the living room/parents' bedroom. The windows in the apartment face south. The bathroom occupies 6 square meters, which is almost the size of the bedroom at 7.5 square meters. The fully recessed balcony adds functionality to the space, but the roof blocks some light from the bedroom, making it dark for the majority of the day. Overall, the living room and kitchen serve as the center of the home, making the other rooms feel like additions.

Figure 6. Tkaczyk-Zdziechowski's apartment floor plan.



## Kitchen Analysis

The kitchen and living room together occupy 28 square meters, making this unit the largest in the apartment. The cooking area is L-shaped, located in the corner of the wall shared with the bathroom and the adjacent wall. All facilities, such as the induction stove, oven, and dishwasher, are located on one wall, while the other wall provides additional storage space. Large windows allow ample light into the space in the afternoon and evening, which is beneficial for cooking, as most meal preparation occurs during that time. The dining table is situated next to the windows, quite far from the cooking area. As shown in the pictures and floor plan, there is enough space for food preparation between the sink and the stove, as well as some space on the right side of the stove<sup>8</sup>. Therefore, an additional workspace in the form of a table is not necessary.

## Cooking Habits

In this household, one person is responsible for cooking for the family. More than two meals are prepared each day, taking between one and two hours. Cooking is usually not a solo activity. The dish most often prepared is meat stew, as it is the family member's favorite. The microwave is used between one and five times a week. Food is ordered to the house once a month or less; however, dining out occurs more than five times a month. The household routine includes quick

preparation in the morning with breakfast and a cup of coffee, followed by lunch at work or school, and cooking dinner together in the late afternoon, along with preparing takeaway food for the next day in the evening.

## Correlation

The open kitchen design blurs the lines between cooking, eating, and communal living, bringing these activities together and making the kitchen and living room the heart of the home, where family life revolves. The most frequently prepared dish, while not necessarily the quickest, is the family's favorite, reflecting a high level of satisfaction with the cooking area. The kitchen is equipped with all essential appliances, such as a dishwasher, induction cooking stove, oven, and microwave, which enhances its efficiency. The open layout encourages cooking together as a family activity<sup>9</sup>. Natural light is also an important aspect, as daylight makes the space feel more welcoming and alive. The apartment is brightest in the evening and afternoon, coinciding with when everyone returns home. Overall, the kitchen has sufficient storage space, a satisfying cooking area, and meets the occupants' needs. The favorite feature of the kitchen is the dishwasher, which is particularly valuable for people with limited time, allowing them to spend less time on cleaning.

## Białousz's apartment. Warszawa, Poland.

2-person household  
year of construction: 2016  
42 m<sup>2</sup>

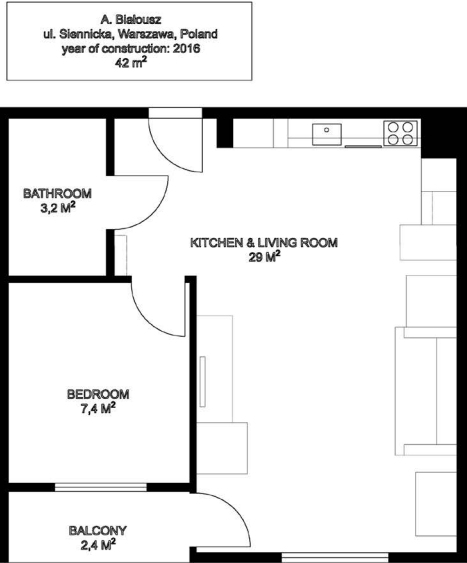
Figure 7. Photography of the kitchen in Białousz's apartment.



## Apartment's context

The apartment is located in the Praga Południe district of Warsaw. The surrounding estates are primarily from after 2010 and are occupied by young families with children. Within the estate, there are a grocery store, café, bakery, preschool, and playground. The construction is mainly made of reinforced concrete blocks. The area itself is quite peaceful, with plenty of green spaces and playgrounds. The apartment was purchased specifically for renting out, which is why it was delivered furnished with all the necessities. Based on the floor plan, it appears that the apartment is designed to accommodate a couple, as suggested by the presence of only one bedroom.

Figure 8. Białousz's apartment floor plan.



### Person's Context

In this household, two women psychology students live together. Both are in their 20s and are good friends, so in addition to sharing an apartment, they also plan activities together, such as going to the theater or attending parties. One of the roommates works part-time and has other fixed commitments during the weekends. Due to their busy and hectic schedules, the apartment serves primarily as a place to rest quickly between tasks and as a temporary living space during their studies, so they do not envision a long-term future in this apartment.

### Floor plan Analysis

The apartment has one bedroom, one bathroom, a living room with an open kitchen, and a fully recessed balcony. All windows are located on the south-facing wall. The two roommates share the apartment, with one occupying the separate bedroom and the other using the living area. The apartment is designed in a square shape, with no hallway, which could create more space for storage and make it feel relatively more spacious than it actually is.

### Kitchen Analysis

The kitchen is located right next to the apartment's entrance and has no direct daylight. The cooking area is shaped as an open kitchen with an L-shaped wall unit. It includes a dishwasher, microwave, and oven. The induction cooktop is situated

under the hood on the right side of the cooking counter and was chosen by the interviewed roommate as the favorite feature of the kitchen. The cooking area occupies around 6 square meters, but there are no clear boundaries between the entrance, kitchen, and living room. The dining table, which also serves as the working table, is positioned on the right side next to the wall at the end of the kitchen unit. As observed, there is limited space for food preparation, only the counter surrounding the sink<sup>10</sup>.

### Cooking Habits

Both roommates are studying and working, usually lacking a fixed daily routine. Most days are busy and spent outside the home, which is reflected in their tendency to order food or eat out. In this household, cooking takes less than an hour a day, with one to two meals prepared. The oven is used once a month or less, while the microwave is used more than once a day. Cooking is viewed as a necessity rather than a pleasure, which correlates with the most frequently prepared meal: pasta of various kinds, chosen for its efficiency and quick preparation time. When they do cook, they prepare meals for each other, creating a shared dining experience; however, they often prefer to cook alone.

### Correlation

In this household, cooking is not a primary activity in their daily schedule. Due to the fast pace of life and irregular daily events, cooking and eating have become secondary tasks. Studies, work, and other commitments dictate the timing and frequency of meals throughout the day. Often, there are only one or two meals a day, with quick snacks in between activities. A significant amount of food is ordered, which explains the frequent use of the microwave, as it can quickly heat up meals prepared in advance. The kitchen space, described as unsatisfactory, exacerbates the situation, as cooking becomes challenging due to the lack of space for preparation and storage. For this

household, the emphasis on short preparation times and efficiency is crucial for successful meals, which is why the dishwasher is a favorite feature—it saves valuable time that would otherwise be spent on cleaning. Another noteworthy point is the limited preparation space; the only free area on the counter between the sink and stove is occupied by the coffee machine and kettle, leaving no room for actual cooking.



## Conclusion

The relationship between cooking habits and how we design our homes is incomplete without considering the transcendent aspect of cooking as a symbol. Through cooking, people share with others and create opportunities for community gathering. Cooking signifies care, affection, and belonging.

This is why there is no ideal kitchen plan that could universally encourage meal preparation; however, certain features can enhance the functionality of the space. For instance, a dishwasher is considered one of the most important necessities in the kitchen. It saves significant time that would otherwise be spent on cleaning, making a substantial difference for people with tight schedules.

In Chmura's family house, the kitchen is small and not functional, and it takes far too long to prepare a healthy meal for six people. Yet, somehow, cooking remains a part of tradition—a magical ritual that creates bonds between family members. It signifies belonging.

Looking at floor plans, the location of the cooking area itself also plays a crucial role in how we perceive the space. A kitchen located at the center of the home becomes its heart, while a small, separate kitchen tends to make cooking feel like mere preparation rather than an event in itself.

An interesting correlation is how an open kitchen with ample workspace creates an environment where meals are prepared by more than one person. Even though cooking for a three-person household can be easily done alone, the dynamics change. Choosing to cook alone often relates to a lack of working space or overall functionality.

The windows in the kitchen are also an intriguing aspect. They may not be necessary for the functionality of the space, but they bring life into it, making it more welcoming and easier to work in. Even when observing people at home or in public places, they are more likely to choose a seat next to the window, where the outside world can be seen.

Another important aspect is the increasing pace of everyday life. Nowadays, mealtimes at home are no longer a routine. With so many options—such as ordering food, eating at inexpensive restaurants, or buying ready meals at supermarkets—it has become a luxury to have time for cooking at home and to know how to cook. Consequently, the idea of a self-cooked meal has evolved from a daily routine into a special event or hobby. A person who can prepare a healthy and tasty meal is now considered talented, whereas in the past, and even now in many traditional Polish homes, it is often seen as a necessity for women to know how to cook.

Cooking is a symbol of love and affection that we have, either for ourselves or for our loved ones. What happens when there is no space for a dining table or for cooking? Does it mean that we have no more of that kind of love to give, or has it transformed into different forms?

Our homes have been shaped differently depending on the times we have lived in. In a family house, the kitchen was often alienated and mysterious. In a small family apartment with an open kitchen, life was centered around cooking together. Now, when we eat alone, cooking feels less fascinating. Is it all about sharing?

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## Figures

Each photo of the kitchen was taken by the person filling the form, to whom the space belongs.

## Floor plans

Floor plans were reconstructed by the author of the article. Drawings were not made in a specific scale and are only meant for the article, as they show the specifications of the kitchen and living area.

