

SKIP NOVAK

A WELL-DESIGNED GALLEY IS A FUNDAMENTAL ASSET
FOR SERIOUS OFFSHORE SAILING

We know that an army marches on its stomach. This is also true of any yacht crew. All is possible at the dock, but in rough weather you should be able to carry on in the galley and not have to default to cheese, biscuits and Mars Bars.

When I peruse galley layouts in the medium range (50ft-80ft) of bluewater cruisers I am often perplexed as to how it was all conceived, taking into consideration 15° of heel and the occasional roll to 30°.

Many, if not most, of these interior features in the competitive yacht market are style-driven. Of course they are, otherwise there is a risk of not selling these vessels when deals are closed at boat shows on the hard or in the water at the marina.

If you display something functional that will work at sea it will, by definition, be all too agricultural looking.

As you might expect, I have some unconventional solutions that might not lend themselves to cordon bleu meal preparation but they do work for assembling 'gut luggage' of high quality and quantity. This is just what you need offshore, and especially if you're dealing with big numbers of crew. Events like the ARC come to mind.

It is a given that a galley must be on one side or the other. A floating island on the centreline (as in a house) would not do as the hull is needed to ground lockers above counter height – this is stowage space that is always needed.

The cooker, as the fundamental piece of galley equipment, should be facing fore or aft, not athwartships, though this is something that is hard to achieve the smaller the boat.

This means you can lean against the counter space and cabinets below on both sides. This is not only more comfortable but safer; being trapped into a galley strap in front of an athwartships cooker is a recipe for an accident as you are in the firing line of anything taking flight in a big roll. The difficulty, though, is that a gimbaling cooker or hob and oven facing fore or aft takes up an inordinate amount of space.

But read on...

Another fundamental is that the sinks should be as near the centreline of the boat as possible, so they can drain by gravity on

both tacks. Non-return valves get stuck, and although you can have a Y-valve and switch to a hand pump, a sink on the lee side is more often than not likely to be continually flooded below the waterline. The inboard side of the sinks (if near centreline) should have a high splash-back, say 300mm, to keep things neat.

Now to some details. We have all cooked on yacht cookers with three or sometimes four burners, where it is impossible to have pots or pans of any size on centre of the burners. They just don't fit.

Regarding the hob, our solution is, rather than starting with the cooker, to begin with two primary pots and make a custom hob with high fiddles to fit exactly those two pots aligned fore and aft.

For our capacity (up to 13 people) we have two 12lt Lagostina pressure cookers. The regime is one pot for stew or sauce and the other for the pasta, rice or potatoes.

The oven is an electric domestic fixed installation. This has some limitations at sea, but certainly works for baking

bread, baked potatoes and anything more or less dry, using wedges to level the pans.

Many people are afraid of pressure cookers but even if you don't use the pressure function, they are ultimately safe because they are deeper than a normal pot and you can close the lids positively if need be.

But back to the sinks, which should be double. Again start with those pots and have made custom sinks integral to the counter top which are deeper than off-the-shelf models and big enough to get these big pots in the sink and comfortably under the tap.

Lastly, I am amazed to see galley counter tops without substantial fiddles. Ours are 75mm high on all sides. Seems high, but that really is what it takes to rest a jar or cup against it without tripping up and capsizing.

The counter top is best in stainless steel and fiddles the same, with nicely welded and ground corners for cleaning. The counter tops need to contain major spills which will occur – and often. Best to keep the sauce off your shoes and the walls.

The downside is there are higher costs to bear as some of this fundamental equipment is bespoke. But there is no better way to spend the money.

In the end it all comes down to whether you'll be spending more time offshore or at the dock. ■

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