

A Great “No-smoke” - Kitchen in Sri Lanka

“I looked around in pleasant surprise”

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What you need in a kitchen is light and ventilation, no smoke or soot, easy storage of dry food ingredients, and a hygienic place to keep washed utensils. This can be provided in the most stylish and expensive manner, but the same basic needs can also be fulfilled in a village kitchen using your imagination and innovative household engineering.

It is just such an improved kitchen for the village woman that has been designed and is being promoted by “Integrated Development Agency– IDEA”, a Sri Lankan NGO based in Kandy. In so doing, they have thrown out the myth that the poor need just to put three bricks or stones together in a sheltered place, light a fire and their kitchen is ready!

As I entered the kitchen designed and planned by IDEA in Kandy, *I looked around in pleasant surprise*. It was very well planned and had all the features needed for a good kitchen, using material easily available locally in all villages.

The improved earthen cook stove or “chullha” was not on the ground as is customary. It had been put on a platform at a convenient working height. Instead of the usual thin pipe chimney, it had been given a wide brick chimney (a chimney hood), with the dimensions of the cooking platform. For optimum utilization of space, simple shelves using rods were built two-and-a-half to three feet above the stoves.

Ventilation was provided very cleverly, by leaving a gap of at least 12 inches between the top of the wall and the roof. Bamboo pieces formed a grill in this gap, while letting in both air and light. Small

holes in the wall did the same work, and a window near the work place also ensured fresh air.

To let in daylight, a piece of glass had been fitted into the roof where a rectangle of the thatch had been removed. This provided overhead light!

One wall too had a piece of glass fitted in for light. No electric bulbs were used, and as much natural light as possible was provided. A work surface has been built along one wall, using old bricks plastered with mud.



The grinding stone, a must in any home in the South Asian region, was also fixed on a small stand made from bricks plastered with mud. This eliminated sitting on the ground for grinding, and ensured cleanliness, apart from keeping the woman's clothes clean.

In the corner even a small sink has been provided with a pipe for waste water leading out into the greenery. This pipe was at least 6-8 feet long which meant no puddle of water near the kitchen.

As I stood in the center of this kitchen, looking critically in all directions, I could not find anything missing that a good kitchen needs.

It was a simple kitchen. It was an inexpensive kitchen. But it was an efficient kitchen, which surely helped the woman to have an improved work environment, and took out some of the drudgery she has to undergo daily.

For a full version of the article and more on cooking solutions:
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