



Anders Montan,
Hall of a farmhouse in the German
region of Lippe, Around 1900
(Oil on linen 39.5 x 47.5 cm),
In the background left kitchen area
with open hearth,
Lippisches Landesmuseum Detmold

There are kitchen rooms that are clearly separate from other rooms. Then there are open kitchen rooms, that seem to transition smoothly into other functional areas. A tendency to have kitchens that open to dining areas is growing, but separate kitchens still seem the standard today. A considerable majority of Germans considers separate kitchens most important. This has not always been the fashion. Separate kitchens came into existence only during the 18th and 19th century. Until then, separate kitchen areas had been the privilege of the highest echelons of church and nobility. The idea of a separate room came from the Romans, as did the term "kitchen". In townhouses and on farms, the term "kitchen" was first used in the Middle Ages (in German, many medieval sources use the term "Kuchen"), but this term did not name a separate room, rather a functional area within the house around the hearth, which was not strictly separate. Well into the 19th century in Lippe, as in all of Northern Germany, the open hearth – source of warmth and light as well as a cooking facility – was situated at the end of the hall. Earlier, such halls had covered the entire ground section of the houses. Smoke used to blow all over the house, and out off the "owls' hole" in the roof.

The development of chimneys in the wall made it possible to get rid of the smoke in a controlled way. The hearth in the townhouse after the 15th century, and in the farmhouse after the 18th century, was

moved to the place directly below the wall chimney, to the rear wall of the hall. At the same time, hearths were built higher than before, on a plinth at knee height or even higher. No doubt, this was to bring it closer to the overhanging mantel above the fire in order to make sure as much smoke as possible found its way into the chimney. Open fires produced too much smoke and soot. This led to the invention of the oven, and made the development of the "Stube" possible, a small separate living room that could be heated without smoke. This

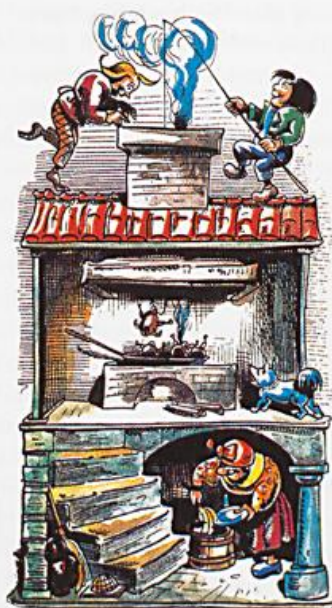


Formerly open hearth with an iron stove and mantled oven placed in the chimney casing,
Detmold, Auguststrasse 11, um 1900

differentiation of the floor plan led to the separation of kitchens from halls. Kitchens then became separate rooms, defined by stone walls.

Prerequisite was the banning of the fire into a closed stove, and

Kitchen room – development up to 1900



Wilhelm Busch, Max und Moritz.
Widow Bolte's kitchen, with raised
fireplace and chimney casing, 1858

evacuation of smoke through the chimney, because open fires were unsuitable for small rooms.

In late 18th century Berlin, former military barracks were converted into urban rental barracks. These buildings, euphemistically called "family homes", had long dark internal hallways, along the sides of which were the live-in kitchens of the different families – five by seven steps in size. There were no living rooms or bedrooms – all of life took place in these kitchens. In summer, these rooms were very hot, as people had to cook in them. In winter, when they could hardly be aired because of the bitter cold, they were very stuffy. In these kitchens, people cooked, slept,

lived, and did outwork. Frequently, a bed was rented out to a "sleeper". In the 19th century, the rental barracks developed into what became the urban workers' tenements. In workers' flats, kitchens were usually also living rooms. On Saturdays, people took their weekly bath in the kitchen. These standards were very different to those of the suburban, upper class villas.

The middle and upper classes still understood kitchens as house-keeping rooms in the widest meaning of the word. In small houses, kitchens were simply a room for cooking plus a small larder. In big mansions; kitchens might occupy an entire wing or floor of the buildings and needed separate entrances. Late in the 19th century, kitchens in town houses were often in the basement. Noise and especially smells from kitchens were unwanted, following the fashion of the aristocracy's palaces and country houses. Kitchens were located as far away from living and representative rooms as possible. Housewives were seldom in the kitchens – kitchens were the place for the servants. Dishes were prepared, cooked and garnished, cooking appliances were cleaned, tableware and cutlery were washed and polished, all in the kitchens. In these houses, the kitchen was also the staff dining room. Only very big households had a separate servants' dining room. Even in working-class flats, it became customary to store some food staples in separate cellars. In the cities, where everything was available daily and fresh in the shops, only minimum stock-

piling of food was required. In upper class households, even the pantries were separated from the kitchen, and furnished with cabinets for tableware, silver and tablecloths. In medium sized households, pantries often had sinks for doing the dishes. The cooking pots and pans were washed in a separate scullery to avoid smells. The laundry room was always separate from the kitchen, even in small houses

1858 Kitchen of outworkers in a Berlin tenement, 1910,
With tiled hearth, gas lighting and faucet with sink

