

## What is the Right Kitchen Island Size for You?



By [Karuna Eberl](#)

Updated Sep. 16, 2024

Too small, and you're losing valuable space, too big and it's clunky to navigate: Here's how to pick the perfect kitchen island dimensions.

My ideal kitchen is open and airy, with ample room in and around it for people to hang out and share stories while I cook up a feast. I've found that I don't actually need a huge kitchen to make this possible; rather, I just need to use the space I do have more efficiently. An island is often a great solution, so long as the kitchen island dimensions are proportionate to the space.

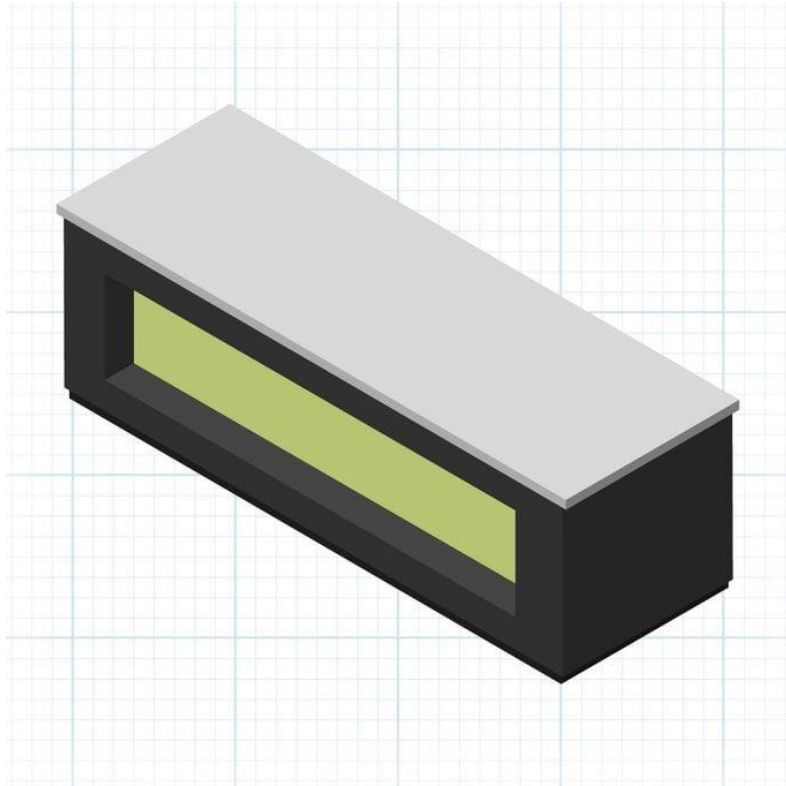
Here's how to choose those island dimensions wisely, plus what to do if your existing island is too large or small.

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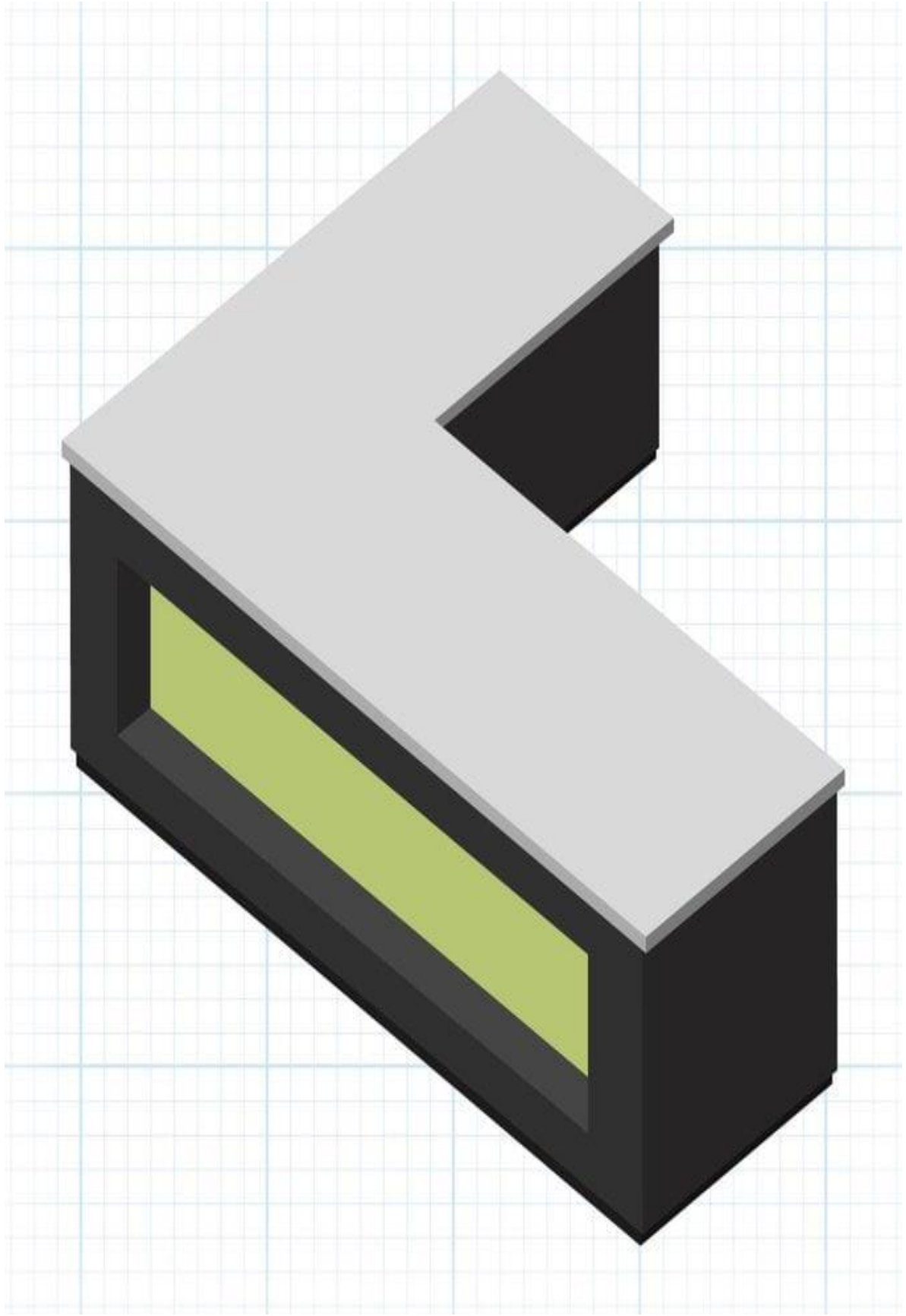
## Common Kitchen Island Shapes and Sizes

### Rectangular Islands



rectangular kitchen islands are the most common design for medium and large kitchens. They add ample counter space, house built-in appliances and increase storage and seating space. They typically range in size from 2'x4' to 4'x8'. "These are perfect for pretty much any kitchen, but particularly wide open spaces," says Courtney Cole, an interior designer with [TileCloud](#).

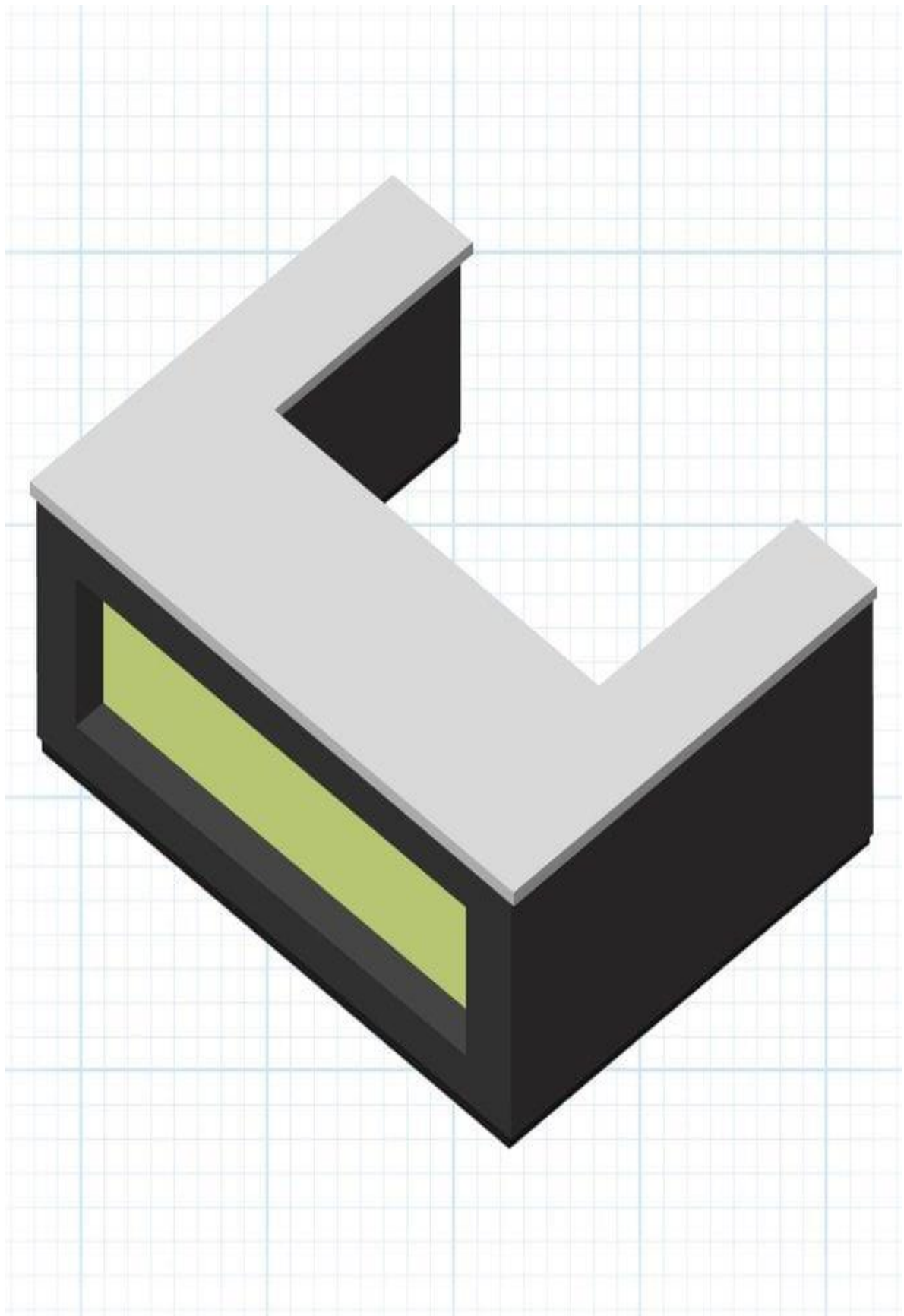
### **L-Shaped Islands**



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L-shaped kitchen islands, or peninsulas, can add more surface area than rectangular islands, with the benefit of distinct zones for prep work and seating. They often include additional storage or a small breakfast nook. “This shape works best in larger kitchens, particularly in open layouts, where the island can create a visual flow and separate different areas,” says Charlie Kongkaeow, owner and designer at [Kitchen Solvers of Grayslake](#).

### **U-Shaped Islands**

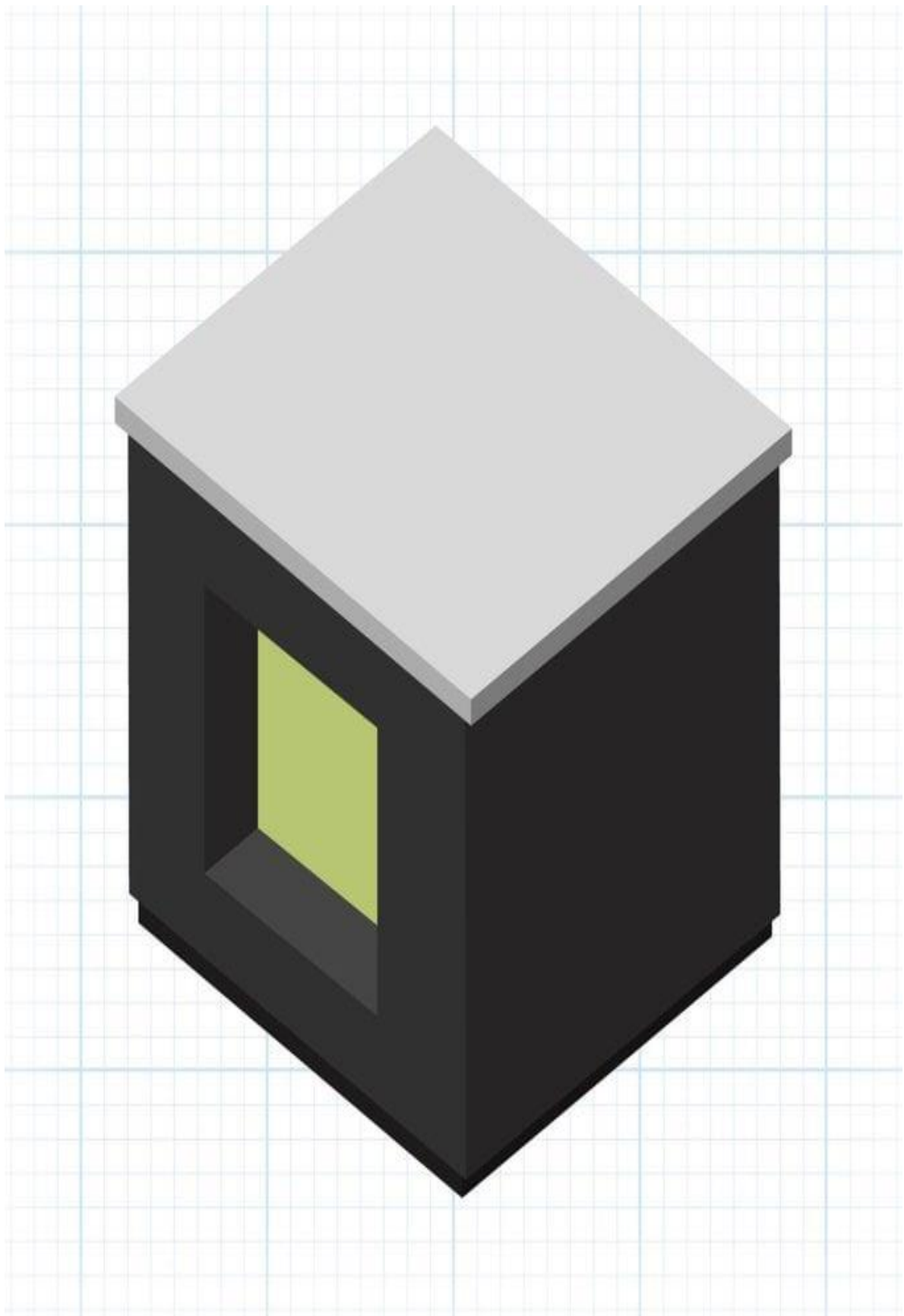


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U-Shaped kitchen islands offer the most workspace and often include a sink, cooktop and integrated seating around the outside bend. Because they surround the cook on three sides, they give convenient access to various cooking stations, plus act as a central hub for entertaining.

“These kitchens are commonly found in very large, open-concept spaces where the island serves as a central feature,” says Diana George, founder at [DG Design Group Builders](#). “They’re ideal for frequent cooks who need separate zones for prep, cooking and serving.”

### **Square Islands**

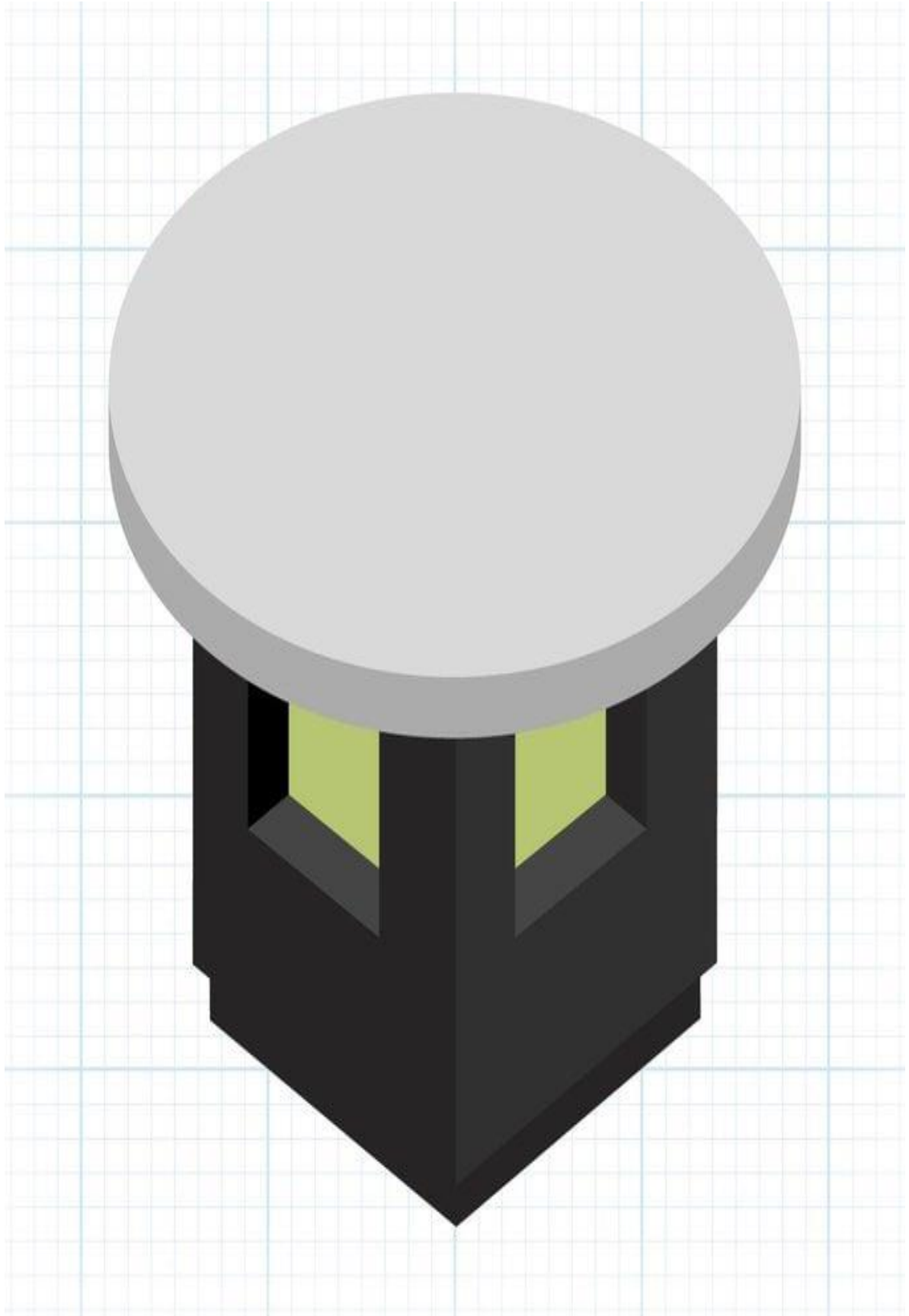


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Square islands are a great option for smaller to medium-sized kitchens since they're compact yet functional. They're particularly good for kitchens with a square layout. "They're often used for prep and quick meals and can include storage, but their smaller size limits the number of appliances," says Kongkaeow.

### **Circular Islands**

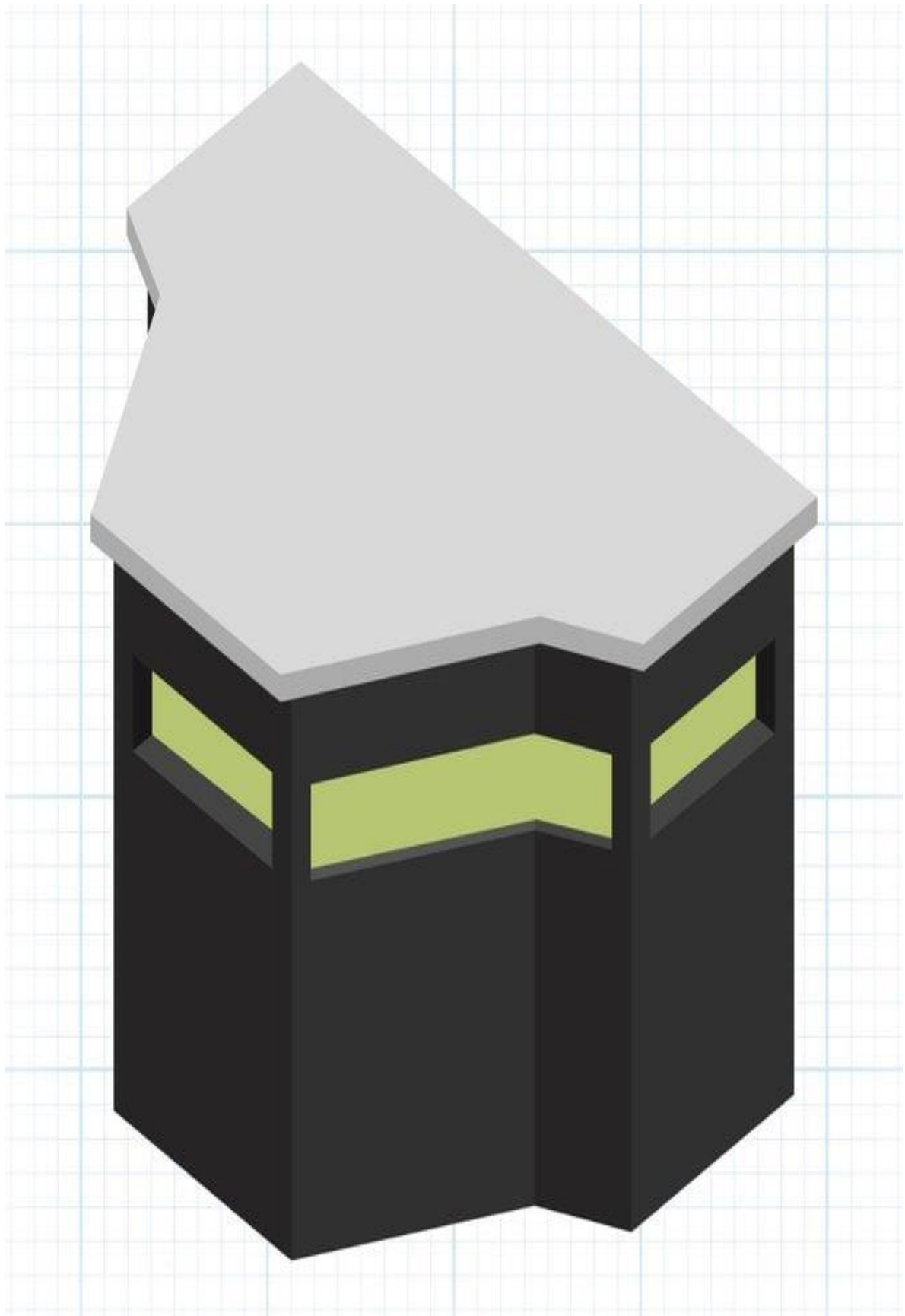




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Circular and oval islands are less common. They often feature tiered levels or open shelving, and are best suited for kitchens with unique layouts, or in open spaces where the island doubles as a dining area, says Kongkaeow. “These make a design statement and are often used for socializing and dining rather than prep work,” he says.

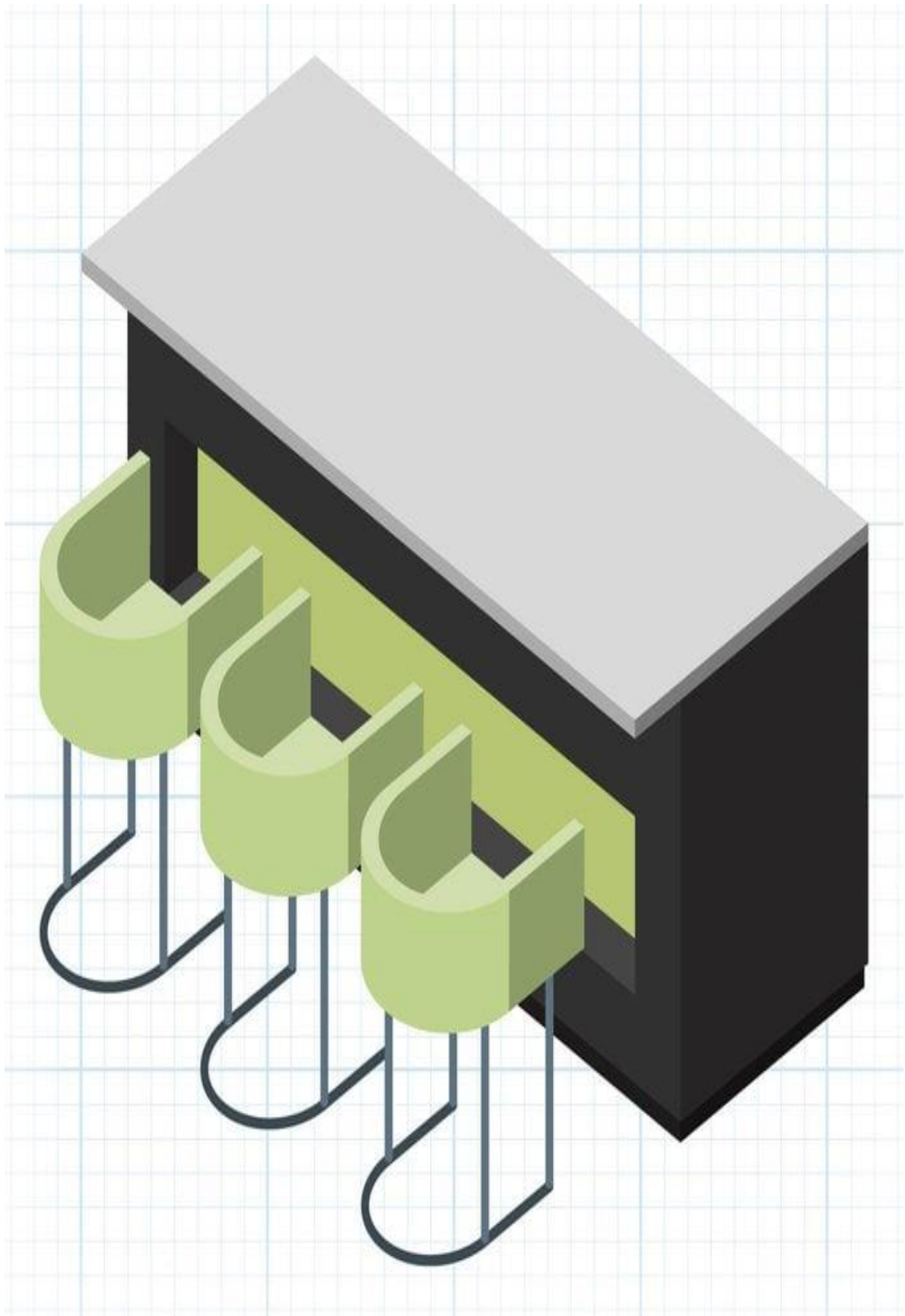
### **Irregular Islands**



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For challenging or unique spaces, custom-made, irregularly shaped islands are the go-to. You can have a lot of fun getting creative with them; just make sure you can easily reach all parts of the surface.

### **Islands With Dining Table**



## FAMILY HANDYMAN

A dining table attached to a kitchen island is a trend George is seeing more of. “It’s an excellent way to save space that would otherwise be used for a separate breakfast nook or table,” she says.

### What Are the Standard Dimensions For a Kitchen Island?

Kitchen island dimensions depend on the size of the kitchen. Still, a good rule of thumb for balancing practicality and aesthetics is to make them about one-third the length of the kitchen, which roughly translates to:

- **Small kitchen:** 2’x4’
- **Medium kitchen:** 3’x5’
- **Large kitchen:** 4’x7’

They are typically 36 inches high to match most countertops, or 42 inches if you want seating for bar stools.

“Size truly depends on the space itself,” says Adrienne Schindler, a designer with [Lamont Bros. Design and Construction](#). “I like to keep design principles such as the 60-30-10 rule and the Golden Ratio in mind. This approach ensures that the island is proportional to the overall kitchen space.”

### How to Pick the Right Kitchen Island Size For Your Kitchen

To choose the right kitchen island dimensions for your kitchen, consider the following:

- **Clearance:** Allow at least 36 inches on all sides to keep it easy to move about the kitchen and open cabinets and drawers.
- **Materials:** Choose an aesthetic that complements existing cabinetry.
- **Proportions:** “In a small kitchen, a compact, mobile island might work best. In larger kitchens, a substantial, feature-rich island can serve as the focal point,” says Kongkaeow.
- **Functionality:** Consider what you need from your kitchen, such as more storage, cooking areas or seating.

“It’s also crucial to evaluate the work triangle, or relationship between your stove, sink and refrigerator,” says Schindler. “A well-placed island can enhance the flow within this triangle, making your kitchen more efficient.”

### What To Do If My Kitchen Island Is Too Big

An island that’s too big will overwhelm the kitchen, making it difficult to travel through and work in. If you have difficulty reaching the center of the island, that’s also a clear sign that it’s too big, says Schindler.

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If you think your kitchen island is too big, you can:

- Modify the layout to better fit the space, which might be as simple as cutting off the overhanging portion.
- Declutter the area around the island to improve traffic flow.
- Declutter the island itself by removing bulky items like built-in appliances.
- To justify the use of the space, add features or repurpose the island for specific tasks. For example, add storage, a built-in wine rack, a dining area or a coffee station.

### **What To Do If My Kitchen Island Is Too Small**

If your kitchen island is too small, you're missing out on useful space. Also, "if the island looks out-of-place and random, it's probably too small," says Cole. To remedy that:

- Extend the countertop overhang on one or more sides. Schindler recommends a 12" overhang for this.
- Expand the surface with a drop-leaf section to increase prep area.
- Add cabinets from the same brand with a butcher block countertop. "The contrast can be a great design choice, provided the kitchen space allows for it," says George.
- Add shelving on the sides or underneath. "That is a great place for to organize cookbooks for easy access," says Kongkaeow.
- Add additional storage, such as shelving or hooks to enhance its utility without needing more space, says George.
- Pair it with a rolling cart or mobile island.
- Place it against a wall or use stools to bulk up the space, says Cole.

### **About the Experts**

- **Diana George** is Founder and Principal at [DG Design Group Builders](#), a full service California design and build firm specializing in spaces that blend modern elements with exposed, natural materials.
- **Adrienne Schindler** is a designer with [Lamont Bros. Design and Construction](#) in Washington State. She received her B.A. in interior design from Washington State University, and is passionate about creating spaces that help make people's lives better.
- **Charlie Kongkaeow** is owner and kitchen design expert at [Kitchen Solvers of Grayslake](#), where he uses his passion for innovative design to create functional and beautiful kitchen spaces.
- **Courtney Cole** is an interior designer with [TileCloud](#), where she's helped renovate hundreds of kitchens and custom-make dozens of islands.

*Originally Published: September 16, 2024*