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Real Estate

Give the Sink a Break



Benjamin Norman for The New York Times

The owners of this four-bedroom four-bath co-op between West 75th and 76th Streets decided to open and enlarge the kitchen six years ago, installing a Miele dishwasher.

By [MARC SANTORA](#)

AMONG the indignities that one may suffer when renting a [Manhattan](#) apartment — too little space for too much money, dismal

natural light, tiresome flights of stairs, creepy neighbors — the lack of a dishwasher is high on many lists.

So when people make the leap from renter to owner, not having to hunch over a sinkful of dirty dishes is a must.

“It is now an inalienable right, not a privilege,” said Maria Manuche, a broker at the Corcoran Group.

No apartment would be built today without this basic convenience, and most built in recent decades have dishwashers. Some luxury addresses have two. But in prewar buildings, dishwashers are not a given.

During boom times, buyers are often willing to overlook inconveniences, figuring they can make all the fixes they need themselves and still turn a profit if they want to resell an apartment.

In the current market, buyers can afford to be choosy.

Frances Katzen, a broker at Prudential Douglas Elliman, says that there was a time when having a dishwasher in a prewar apartment would have been considered an anomaly. "Now it is expected," she said.

Securing approval from a co-op board might make installing a dishwasher cumbersome, but brokers were hard pressed to think of any building that simply forbids them.

Unlike washer/dryers, which many condo and co-op boards do not allow, and garbage disposals, which were illegal in the city for years and are often still frowned upon by some boards, a dishwasher is something that can be installed by sellers with little fuss or expense.

Even in old buildings, the plumbing in most cases can accommodate new dishwashers.

"In today's environment it can be a complete deal breaker to not have a dishwasher," Ms. Manuche said.

Laura Begley Bloom, 43, a deputy editor at Travel + Leisure magazine, lived without a dishwasher for 13 years in a circa 1900 apartment at 331 West 21st Street.

"The hookups were there," she said, "but I just never got around to putting one in. Actually, I find washing dishes somewhat therapeutic."

During the years she lived alone, her dish drainer was not exactly overflowing and she was happy to do without.

Then she got married two years ago and the dish count rose substantially. Still, she and her husband, Jonathan Bloom, did not bother installing a machine.

But when they decided to put their two-bedroom apartment on the market for \$645,000 earlier this year, their broker, Mike Lubin of Brown Harris Stevens, told them it was time to make the upgrade.

“He said, ‘You are going to lose 50 percent of the people looking straight away,’ ” she recalled. It was an investment of less than \$500, but would have a much greater return, they were told.

So they went ahead and put in a Frigidaire, and have been encouraged by the reaction of people who have come to see the apartment.

And once she had the dishwasher, she couldn’t stop using it. Now, she can’t believe she put it off for so long.

“Everyone has been making fun of me,” Ms. Begley Bloom said.

As she and her husband search for a larger apartment, they hope the one they end up with has a dishwasher already in place.

[Here](#) are prewar apartments listed for sale in Manhattan, each of which has at least one dishwasher.

Six Sellers, Eight Dishwashers

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110 East 57th Street, Apt. 11 FGH

PRICE: \$1.995 million

MAINTENANCE: \$2,896 a month

BROKER: Frances Katzen, Prudential Douglas Elliman (212) 350-8575; elliman.com

This three-bedroom three-bath co-op is in the Dorchester, steps from Park Avenue.

Credit: Benjamin Norman for The New York Times