

## Kitchen Confessions

I am a stereotypical Italian-American when it comes to cooking. I like to do it, especially in mass quantities, for large groups (including strays). So when I recently downsized from a large suburban home to a one bedroom apartment in New York City, I thought I would die without my huge kitchen. However, I am thriving in my new place, and what I love most about it is the tiny galley.

For someone like me who prefers to be alone in her kitchen, this new one is just about perfect. Did I say it only fits one? What I hated about my previous kitchen was that it became the gathering place for all my company. I used to joke that I needed to get some caution tape to cordon off parts of the kitchen from my guests. I cannot count how many times I wanted to use my teacher voice and firmly state, "Please take your drinks and snacks into the den now."

I abhor help. The question, "Is there anything I can do?" irritates me. When I cook for special occasions I am highly organized and controlled. If you are a guest in my home, you likely know me well enough that I will ask for help when needed. If I'm not doing that, then your help will actually mess me up. So please, take that drink and go sit down. I want you to enjoy yourself. Really, I do. That is how you can help. Let me see that you are having a wonderful time, and consider me assisted.

I become centered during my meal preparation. I am focusing inward--softly and serenely supporting my inner self. It's a very quiet, lovely place for me to be, and I really want to be there alone. I hope that doesn't sound ungrateful. If you really love me, you will leave me to it. I will emerge from my kitchen better and more balanced than I went in. So please, leave me be in there--at least for a little while. That is how you can help.

Then we will eat and drink and have dessert. And when it is time for cleanup, guess what? I actually enjoy that, too. I sincerely want to do it myself. Alright, if I'm honest, I must admit that I don't trust anyone else to do the cleanup my way, or as my grandmother said, "the proper way." And like her, if anything breaks I can only blame myself. It keeps good relations, and it provides me with deep satisfaction. Calm is restored. Order is re-established. My soul flourishes in a tidy kitchen.

So, please, come on over to my new place. Let me cook for you. Have a drink and relax. Enjoy the company. Take advantage of a night off, because, really, I don't need any help.