

9 ** excerpt from Large Family Mothering Amy Maryon KITCHEN

Your kitchen is going to be a central gathering place in your home. This is where you will spend the majority of your life. You will be cooking three meals a day, helping your children with schooling, making crafts, and working on projects in this zone. This is the area where Dad first walks into and sees his family gathered. It should be a place of peace and not messy chaos.

When you walk into this room, what is the first thing that you notice? Is there an area that needs to be worked on? Do you have a large accumulation of paper that needs to be put away? This zone can also become a catch all for everyone's items if you are not careful.

This room needs to be accessible and able to clean well as it needs to be the most hygienic. If you can make the lighting better, do so by changing out higher wattage light bulbs. Consider window treatments that allow the most light in this area, especially if it is a darker spot. This room needs to be functional as well as adaptable so that it is pleasant for the cook to be able to do her duties. Give the walls a boost by painting a new color of paint. Choose a bright cheery color. Use a semi-gloss so that it is easier to wipe off and clean. If your cabinets are drab, consider painting them a new color. They don't have to be wood grain, you can bring new life into your kitchen by painting the fronts of all your cabinets.

Keep rugs to a minimum in this room. A good foam mat in front of your kitchen sink is a good idea, as you will be standing here for long periods of time. Everything else is just something that you are going to have to shake off each day. If you do want rugs, consider something with a pattern to it, as food will drop and it will be less noticeable.

For our large family, we have found it more effective to have a large 32 gallon trash can in our kitchen. A regular sized one needed to be emptied two times per day. Having one large can, has helped us cut down on this task.

There are some tips which you can follow when setting up your kitchen and learning the most effective way to arrange things.

Organizing your kitchen space:

When going about organizing your kitchen space, you want to place things where they are going to be the most efficient. You don't want to have to reach from one cupboard to the next when making meals. If you place "like" items together this will help cut down on the amount you move around. Place items that you don't normally use in an out of the way cabinet. You don't want to be getting out your plastic bowls on a regular basis but have to move around serving dishes that you only use a few times per year. Make things accessible and easy.

Choose a cabinet that you can place all your baking items into. I have my mixer, measuring cups, spatula, mixing bowls, and a plug nearby for all my baking projects. This prevents me from reaching to this cabinet, walking over to this one to grab that, and moving things from one counter top to another when baking.

If you have a large pantry, that is excellent. Keep all your food items in one area. It is much easier when putting away groceries or needing to look and see if you have an item if they are all in one place. If you

cannot do that, place like items together. Keep all your cans in one place. Stack all your beans in a row, then vegetables, then fruit, etc. Get in the habit of placing all food labels facing front. This will allow you to see what you have at a quick glance.

Boxed dry goods should be stored by type. Group breakfast cereals together, rice and beans together and staples such as flour and sugar together. Bags of staples such as dried beans, rice, and sugar are odd shapes for shelf storage. It is more efficient to store these in quart jars or see through plastic containers. Square ice cream buckets or plastic coffee cans with labels also do well. Mark clearly on the outside what is contained on the inside. It is important to make sure items are securely closed. Pantry moths will make their way into the tiniest opening and lay eggs in your rice, beans, and flours. You will be surprised one day when you open up the container and find a small web-like environment from these mealy worms. Yuck!

If you live in a humid environment, it is best to store items like flours, cocoa, nuts, and dried fruit in the freezer. This will help control the stability of the flours and like items from going rancid.

If you have a large amount of an item like a 25 lb bag of popcorn seeds, store them in five gallon buckets. I get the square white buckets from a local store who gives them away for free. Again, be sure to securely close these to keep from spoiling. When we lived up north in the cooler states, I was able to store flour, oats, and sugars directly into the buckets and keep in my basement all year long. Since we have moved down south, the humidity is much greater and I can no longer store items like that. I have since purchased online foil storage bags for 5 gallon buckets along with oxygen tablets. You place the tablets into your bucket and seal the bags shut. This will remove any air and moisture from your bags and ensure a longer life of your foods. This has been the best alternative for me. Fifty pounds of flour takes up a lot of space in a freezer!

Organize by level of importance. Long term storage items like bulk oatmeal, flours, etc should go towards the bottom. The most commonly used items go in the center and items that are rarely used go on the highest shelves. Any foods that will spoil should not be in your pantry. Place them on the counter otherwise they may get forgotten.

Store dishware and glasses on an accessible shelf in a cupboard as close to where you usually eat. If you can choose an area closest to your dishwasher or sink, this will help speed up the process after you wash and dry them. If you have small children, keep plastic cups and everyday used items in an area that they can easily access. This allows them to help put dishes away and frees you up from having to get a cup down every time they need one.

How many of each plate and glass should you have? That depends on your situation. We have a set of twelve which allows us all to have one place setting of dishes per person. What happens when you have guests? Our family takes the route of paper products. When you have a group of people over, it is easier to not have to wash dishes when you would rather be visiting. Our favorite dishware is our blates. I know they are not called blates. That is our family made up word. These are low shallow bowls but with sides. They hold soup and cereal well but are flatter and can hold a meal easily. We purchase these from the Amish and they are used every day in our home. All of our dishes are made with melamine. Which is very sturdy. Think what the cafeteria trays are made out of. They are durable and can take a lot of abuse. Anything breakable we have done away with over the years.

Expensive place settings we did away with. I remember picking them out for our wedding and back then I think they were around \$30 per place setting. I also remember the day when I dropped my first plate and

broke it! I have learned over the years to be simple. Non-breakable works well with children. Having special dishes for holidays and such seem nice, but you only use them once per year and then you have to store them. I would opt to pick out a few nice serving trays or bowls for such occasions.

Glasses are nice, but not with a family of children. We purchase the restaurant quality plastic tumblers to use in our home. They are attractive and most importantly—non breakable! Can you tell we have broken many items over the years? I just think back to how often we would replace glass sets and dish sets and now I don't have to do that anymore.

When setting up your coffee area, place it all in one spot. In the cupboard above where your coffee pot sits, place all your mugs, ground coffee, sugars, creamers, etc. This allows you to save time by not moving from one section to the next when making coffee. If you love coffee, invest in an inexpensive grinder. Purchase your whole beans and grind as you need them. This makes the taste much better. The cheapest option is to buy it ground already at the store. But if you are spending money on premium coffee each week this is a good alternative and the taste doesn't even compare. You can get used to anything. I love premium coffee, but I also can get used to drinking instant coffee. Which I did for years.

Your under sink storage. Since this space has such odd dimension and with the presence of pipes it can seem nearly unusable. To make the space as efficient as possible think of placing under the sink storage baskets to store all your cleaning supplies in. Keep all your daily cleaners in a bucket to carry around the home with. Place childproof locks if children are in the home. You can also get slide out or pullout towel bars. These are simple chrome rods on runners to hide towels from view most of the time while keeping them easy to reach. The cabinet door mounted fake drawers in front of the sink are usually just wasted space. There are some small units that you can place on the inside of this to store sponges and soaps, to keep out of view.

Keeping drawers organized is simple and the most effective to keeping your kitchen efficient. Limit them to the storage by type. Keep flatware drawers free of the large utensils that belong in a designated drawer. Use wooden drawer organizers that pull out to the space that you need. They are inexpensive and you can find online or at your local store. Place large spoon and pancake flippers near the stove in a drawer where you will be using them. If you don't have a lot of drawer space, place large spoons and items in a small crock or heavier jar. I used an old speckled blue coffee tin for this purpose. Place next to your stove for easy access. I keep a small tin can in my baking cupboard which contains the utensils I use for baking: whisk, rubber spatula, and cookie scooper. If you keep a drawer for hot pads and trivets, don't store notepads and can openers in the drawer. Have a place for everything. Remember don't keep tons of pens, notepads, paperclips etc in here. Place those in the office area. Keep only one notepad and a pen for taking down notes.

When placing washcloths and towels, make sure they adequately fit in the drawers. We keep one drawer for washcloths and one for towels. This helps them not to get stuck in the top and helps people from grabbing a towel to dry their hands on instead of a washcloth. Pot holders and trivets go near the stove for quick access. If you don't have a drawer available, consider placing a small hook near the area. Keep cleaning rags separate. These can be in their own drawer or placed under the sink in a container.

Instead of throwing all of your extra plastic shopping bags under the sink or in a drawer haphazardly. Make a simple storage tube. Sew together a simple tube out of scrap material. You can place elastic in one end of it to keep it closed. If you are not sewing savvy, cut off an arm or leg from an old shirt or pants. You can hot glue or tie the ends together.

If your cabinet shelves are kind of yucky and you want to line them with shelf paper, skip that and use pieces of linoleum. Cut them to fit exactly and you will have an easy way to wipe them off. One of our homes had this inside and I thought it was so easy to keep clean. Especially when food spills, it is easy to wipe up and looks new again. I have had the shelf paper and it doesn't wear well and looks dirty and used after a while.

The kitchen can be a catch all for your home. It is easy to just shove papers into a drawer or place a random item in the cabinet. Stick to the rule to have a place for everything. Be constantly aware of not placing items that don't belong in here. You need to remind your children if there are things that they have forgotten to pick them up and put them away. This works best for us as well ☺ When you first walk in the door, immediately take your purse, keys, and bags and put them away properly in their place. Don't let them accumulate on the counter tops. While doing your daily cleaning and you come across items that don't belong in here. Place them on the counter top and when you are finished, put them away where they go.

When mail is brought in the home, it should be gone through near the trash can. Dispose of any junk mail promptly. Place magazines where they will be read and take any bills to your office area to be gone through on their designated day.

When organizing appliances and items, find a place inside of the cupboards to keep your counter tops free. Don't put anything out unless absolutely necessary. This will reduce your clutter tremendously. If there is a item that you use everyday such as a coffee pot or blender then keep that out. Items that are not used daily, put away. Keep your counter tops clean. Step back and look at your kitchen. Which area are your eyes drawn to? Is there something that you can do to improve that zone? Is there some things that you can put away? Is there an area that you are drawn to because it is cluttered? Consider going through that and putting it away. Place papers in your desk or office area, not the counter tops. Put keys and other items in your purse. Notice which areas are constantly messy and take hold of cleaning that up.

What sort of items do I need for the Kitchen?

This is an area where you can go overboard in. There are tools and gadgets for just about anything to help make life easier in the kitchen. If you are first starting out or if you are just needing to declutter and get rid of a few things, this is a good section to read.

Cooking items and how many you need:

Insulated baking sheets

If you are just starting out, I would recommend one set of insulated baking sheets. This has one large, one medium, and one small baking sheet. Your oven will only allow you one set at a time, no need for more. As you bake more, you will see if you have a need for another larger pan.

Baking sheets with sides –jelly style roll

Two of these is sufficient. Again, your oven space will only allow two at a time. These are great for baking hamburger patties on, making brownies or bar cookies in, or cooking a pan of chicken fillets.

Muffin tins

Skip the mini muffin tins and go for regular size. Get two pans (24 total muffin slots) as one batch of muffins and cupcakes normally fills two pans. This is good for making breakfast morning egg cups in as well. You can place a strip of bacon around the bottom and fill with a cracked egg for a nicer breakfast. You can also make individual meatloaves in muffin tins. These also pop out and freeze well for a later use.

Stainless steel saucepan

Skip the pan sets, and purchase good quality stainless steel pots. They will last a long time and are better for you. Don't get Teflon which is coated with chemicals that are harmful for you. This small pot works well for making soups, heating up small leftovers, or boiling water in.

Stainless steel stock pot

Invest in a heavier bottomed one as it will make your cooking better. This is good for making chili, cooking noodles, or cooking a pot of rice. In our large family we own two of these. I only have two large burners, so I have no need for more. If you are starting out invest in one, add more as needed.

Large skillet---chicken fryer

This pan works as a frying pan or as an extra pan for making sauces. You can fry in it, as the name suggests but I don't use that feature☺ Having just this size pan allows me to cook up eggs or omelets, but it also allows me to cook spaghetti sauce in it. I can cook pancakes and grilled cheese in it as well. It cuts down on cupboard space because I don't have other sized frying pans to crowd my cupboards with. This one does everything.

Bread loaf pan

I suggest investing in stainless steel bread pans. They will last you a lifetime. I have done the glass ones but they can break. The Teflon coated ones are not safe to use. Spend a little bit more and get a couple. These are great for baking bread, making meatloaf, or making quick breads and freezing.

Baking or casserole dish

You can have an entire cabinet full of these. Keep it simple. A 9x13 sized glass or stainless steel pan is sufficient. You can bake a cake, casseroles, lasagna, or meatballs in it. Having a couple extras for side dishes is a good idea. They are great to put vegetables or potato dishes in. Look for these at garage sales, or thrift stores. Most everyone gets rid of the "odd" ones in their sets. You only need a couple, as you only offer a couple of sides for your meals. In our large family, we have purchased from Sams Club the chafing pans that you would use for a catering party. They are large enough to accommodate our size food needs. Plus they are durable.

Cooking tools

Grater

This is great for shredding items quickly and you can get them cheap. If you find one that has a plastic container to catch all of your shreds, invest in that. This cuts down on having to get another bowl, plus keeps shredding neater. Skip the plastic as it will break easier and go for metal.

Extra large and large serving spoons

These are for stirring foods in your pots on the stove. Skip the plastic and go for stainless steel. The durability can't be beat. You need one extra large sized for pots. Then get two or three larger ones for serving foods. These would fit in your casserole dishes and would scoop out your mashed potatoes and macaroni and cheese. Remember do not leave these in your pots while cooking, the heat will transfer on the handle and you can burn your hands if not careful. Always remove and place outside on a spoon rest.

Wooden spoon

These are good for stirring or mixing up items. Choose a heavier duty one. You only need one.

Rubber spatula

These are good for scraping bowls while baking. Don't use it in cooking pots as it will melt. Use it to scrape out cakes and breads. One is sufficient.

Slotted spoon

An extra large stainless steel one is good for your cooking pots. As well as a larger size one for serving foods that contain liquid. It is good to use in your corn that you are serving to drain out the liquid before placing in on your plate. One of each is sufficient.

Pancake flipper

One good quality stainless steel with a plastic handle is good. These can be used for flipping burgers, cooking scrambled eggs, or flipping pancakes.

Cake server

A small square tipped server is good for scooping out lasagna and cutting brownies and serving them. We own two—a square tipped one and a rectangle-tipped one.

Serrated bread knife

Skip the knife sets that take up your counter space and give you knives you will never use. We have owned three for most of our entire marriage. If you purchase good quality ones and a knife sharpener—they will last a lifetime. You can get a knife sharpener in the kitchen tools section of the store for around \$3. The bread knife is good for cutting....breads.

Large chef knife

This is good for cutting meats, large amounts of vegetables, or cutting through a dessert. Again a good quality one that will last a lifetime.

Vegetable paring knife

This is used daily in our home. I peel potatoes, apples, chop onions, and slice cheese with this. Keep a couple if you are going to have others help you prepare meals. Get ones made with stainless steel, heavier duty, and of good quality.

Can opener

I have owned so many can openers over the years it is ridiculous. Skip the electric kinds, they will eventually break and you will be stuck with an unopened can and no way to open it. The only one that I have found to be worthwhile was one I purchased at Walmart. It has a “Made in America” label on the front. It is stainless steel with black plastic handles. This has lasted me the longest out of any ones we have owned. Remember it is important to keep the blades dry on these or they will rust easily. If you must wash it, dry it well before storing. It cost around \$10 but works better than the more expensive ones that were made elsewhere.

Whisk

A small whisk is a good thing to have in the kitchen. Not a necessity as you can use a fork for most things, but does help. Skip the large bulky ones and invest in a smaller one. This is good for whisking up eggs, puddings, and sauces. Forks work fine if you don't have, but whisks make it go quicker.

Kitchen shears

You have need to cut many things in the kitchens. A sturdy pair of shears works well for cutting meats, children's foods, and a host of many other things you will come across. Just be sure to wash and dry thoroughly after cutting foods and items.

Ladle

You only need one of these. Plastic or metal is fine.

Tongs

Good for picking up meat and can be used for the grill. Get the stainless steel kind.

Plastic measuring cups and spoons

One set is sufficient for these. I would recommend ones that have raised measurements on them—the ones with the sizes printed on them, wash off over time.

Glass measuring cup

A larger 2 cup measurer is sufficient for any of your kitchen tasks.

Cutting board

Get two of the plastic thin kind, one for meats and one for vegetables. These paper thin kinds are easier to store and don't take up much room. If you can get them in different colors to be able to quickly tell the difference, that is a bonus. If not, mark them with a small amount of nail polish or permanent marker. Over time, you can invest in a wooden butcher block cutting board---but it is NOT a necessity.

Colander

Invest in a stainless steel one to keep for your entire life.

Mixing bowls

Invest in stainless steel to last forever. You don't need an entire set of these. Get one large one and one small one. Sam's Club in the restaurant section has a nice large one. You can pick up a smaller one at your local store. The smaller one is nice for mixing up frostings, puddings, and mixtures to be added to your larger pot.

Which small appliances do I really need?

Blender

This is something that you want to get a more expensive, higher quality appliance. Cheaper ones are fine, but what I have learned is that they are "cheap." They break easily and don't mix up as well as a Vitamix or a Kitchen Aid. It will be worth it to save up and get a nicer well made one sometime in the future. Skip the plastic and go for glass---more durable.

Handheld mixer

A cheap handheld one will work fine for the amount of mixing that you will do. We buy the cheapest one about every 2-3 years. That is about how long it lasts for. I have bought the in-between priced models and they just broke. Save up and invest in a nice Kitchen Aid mixer to have forever but until that time, a handheld Sunbeam mixer works for what you will need.

Crockpot

This is great to be able to throw in some ingredients and hours later, dinner is made. Look for ones made of porcelain, you don't want the Teflon coated kinds as they leak chemicals into your foods.

Toaster oven

If you are just starting out and cooking for two people, a toaster oven is a good thing to invest in. Why? Two people do not require that much food. You can heat up leftovers in this, make toast, or bake a small dish. It is more efficient energy wise instead of heating up your big oven for a small dish. It will definitely save you money.

Food processor

Price affects the quality greatly. If you can invest in a more expensive one, than do so. A glass one is going to last longer, be easier to clean, and won't contain odors like plastic does. Look for one with fewer pieces to clean.

Microwave

Consider not getting a microwave. They change the molecular structure of food in order to heat it up. It decrease the availability of certain nutrients in food. Swap it out for a good convection or toaster oven. This will eliminate the need for a toaster. You can heat leftovers up in in and make toast.

Electric roaster

Not a necessity, but an item to purchase and use a few times each year. This comes in handy when I need an extra oven for cooking, especially during the holidays. It is great to put the turkey in and keeps my oven freed up for other things. I also cook my dried beans in this and freeze into individual portion containers. I cook ribs and large batches of macaroni and cheese and spaghetti in this for special meals. It is also nice if your oven is not working and you can't get it fixed right away. I have baked a cake in this before when I realized my oven was dead.

Toaster

Not a necessity, as you can use a toaster oven if you have one. You can also toast bread on a skillet. Our family owns the four slice toaster. To me, it gets in the way and I would get rid of it. But my children and husband enjoy toast on occasion, so I keep it.

Waffle iron

Not a necessity, but something that is good if you want to make waffles. If you don't own one, then you make pancakes.

Sandwich maker

If I was a new bride and I was going to be making meals for just myself and husband, then I would get one of these. These are great for making quick warm sandwiches to eat.

Miscellaneous items

Hot pads—you need two square ones. Skip the mitts, they are big and bulky. But a good choice for children learning to get things out of the oven.

Dish cloths—get the kind that has a mesh scrubbing material on the back to make clean up easier. One set is sufficient

Dish towels—one set is sufficient of these, get a thicker terry cloth kind to absorb water

Serving dishes---purchase a couple for serving foods in.

Dish drying mat---skip the bulky dish rack and opt for one of these. They look much more attractive, don't take up much space, and when you are finished you can throw it in the wash to keep your countertops cleaned. Invest in 2-3 to have one available at all times.

Trivets---if you are handy---crotchet some circle sized ones. These protect your counter tops from heated pots and pans.

Plastic storage sets---if you are decluttering---keep only what you actually use. If you are a new bride, purchase a couple of pieces. You will learn quickly what you actually use and what is a waste. We have two oversized large rectangle containers that can hold a big batch of muffins or cookies. We have one large bowl with a lid for cut up fruit and salads. I own two medium sized containers for leftovers during the week. We also purchased in bulk plastic pint sized deli containers for storage. These are great for storing everything. We use ours for:

- tomatoes pureed and frozen
- shredded cheese---buy in bulk and separate, freeze
- ground beef---buy in bulk, cook and freeze
- shredded chicken---cook in bulk and freeze
- refried beans--homemade
- cooked dried beans
- shredded zucchini---frozen for baking
- smashed bananas---frozen for baking
- homemade applesauce-frozen

There are whole isles full of lots of other kitchen items to make your life easier. Most of them will just accumulate in your cupboards. The items I referenced today are all of the items that we use in our home. I don't own anymore. We have lived this way for many, many years and have made thousands of meals and baked items. We did it with just these tools. If you come to find out that you are doing some task more than others and want a gadget to simplify that---then buy one. This just covers the basics and will get you through without decluttering up your life.

Working effectively in the kitchen

When cooking in the kitchen, keep your sink full of hot soapy water and wash items as you go. Training yourself to wash as you go will make clean up much quicker. At the end of a long day of working in the kitchen, the dishes are the last thing you want to wash. By keeping up on the task, your mess will be less. If you have a helper in the kitchen, don't put knives in the sink, place them in the drain opposite to avoid getting cut accidentally.

Keep a spray bottle full of 1/2 vinegar and 1/2 water under your sink. Use it to wipe down your countertops and stove while cooking. Vinegar is a natural disinfectant. You can also use it to spot clean your floors.

Skip the paper towels, to cut down on waste. Keep a drawer or bucket full of rags to use in the kitchen. Use these to wipe up spills and messes. I like microfiber cloths and flour sack cloths for this reason. Toss in the laundry when done.

Make sure to thoroughly wash off dishes, cutting boards, and utensils well with hot soapy water. Disinfect countertops, knobs, faucet handles, stove handles, etc to avoid any food borne illnesses.

Change dishrag and towel daily as well to cut down on bacteria breeding. Skip the sponges for dishwashing, use a washcloth with a scrubbie backing. Keep some wire scrubbing pads for tough, stuck on food in pots. Rinse out after use and throw away as they fall apart. A three pack lasts our family six months at a time.

Washing dishes and After meals routine

One of my favorite daily tasks is washing dishes. I enjoy looking out my window, reflecting on the bible verses that I have placed around my sink, and pondering things. It is a time of peace for me. I have come to enjoy these few moments of solitude in my day.

I do own a dishwasher, but it is only used when I get behind or can't keep up with the dishes. It is a rare occurrence as we do them immediately after each meal. A tip I have learned for using a dishwasher if you have a spot for a "rinse aid" don't buy the expensive stuff, just fill it with vinegar. It will help your dishes to not have spots and be clear. Skip the heated setting for drying them and let them air dry. Saves money.

Everyone helps after each meal. Everyone eats, so everyone cleans up. As soon as meals are finished, we start scraping all of the leftovers onto one plate or bowl. This cuts down on the "dish washer" doing more work. The more effective you are in cleaning off the plates, the easier it is to hand wash them. Use a scrap of food like a piece of bread, part of a potato, etc to help get "all" of the food remains off. Dump the scraps into the food bucket for the chickens or place in the trash. Stack plates together. Then stack bowls on top. Carry over to the sink and place next to the sink ready to go in. We place utensils in the hot soapy water as the sink is filling. Drink remains are poured into one cup and then dumped out. Cups are then placed in the sink to be washed first. If there is room, we place the plates and bowls, otherwise they get left on the side of the sink until ready.

Dinner leftovers, get put into a container and placed in the refrigerator. We scrape out as much as possible from the pots and pans. Place in the other side of the sink and fill with hot soapy water to start soaking while I continue my tasks. Everyone is helping clean up the table and put items where they need to go. When we had friends stay with us the children enjoyed doing a 10 minute clean up. We set the timer and they worked as quick as they can to try and "beat the clock." I found this quite effective. Those days when we are having a "hum-drum" day with not a whole lot of excitement, we opt to do this to liven up things after meals.

Condiments are closed and returned to the door of the refrigerator. Trivets are put back in the drawer. The table and benches are wiped down. Someone grabs a broom and sweep up any mess that has accumulated while eating. I begin washing the cups and placing them in a row on my drying mat. After they are finished, I grab my stack of plates and bowls and start washing them. As I rinse them, I place them in a row on the

drying mat as well. If they are plates, I stand them up against the backsplash, so the water can run off easier and make drying quicker. Bowls are placed on an angle, next to the plates to drain easier. I wash any “cleaner” serving bowls. I then wipe off my silverware and place it on the mat. This has been soaking the longest so wiping should be easy.

I then might run a quick wipe across the counter tops to wipe off any food. I pay attention to counter edges and check to make sure that the cabinets and drawers don't need food wiped off them. Someone is sweeping the floors and getting underneath where food has dropped while I've been cooking. I wipe off the stove, as it has accumulated splatters from cooking. I double check the oven, for anything I may have left inside of it. We look around and see if there is anything else to put away. We might need to keep a dinner plate out for someone who is still working. That gets placed on the stove top or in the microwave. During breakfast or lunch we may have a little bit of leftovers like some cut up apples and oranges, I leave them out for quick snacking through the day.

Our dishes helper, is currently drying the dishes and putting them away. I then wash my cooking pots and pans. I grab out my metal scrubber to get stuck on foods. I try and soak them immediately to aid in quick removal of foods. If we are baking something that may make cleaning harder, we try and line the pans with aluminum foil to avoid scrubbing. Make sure to wipe around the rim of the pot and on the sides and bottom. The drying mat is emptier now so I can place this on it for the dryer. I tell my children, to not place the lids on directly in case there is some moisture left in the pots. Set off the sides a bit, to allow moisture to escape.

If you do have a pot or pan that has burned on food that seems to not come off, just let it continue to soak. I have tried many different methods in trying to get burned off food to come off easily. I have learned that if you just add hot soapy water and let it sit, it will come off eventually. I leave it soaking, then come back to it after I do other tasks in the kitchen. If it is still stuck on, let it sit longer. I have burned one of my favorite pots badly and it was not looking like it was coming off. I even had my husband take it in the garage and sand it off. It still would not come off!!! I let that pot soak for 3 days! I kept changing the water and trying to scrub it. Finally on the 3rd day it starting breaking off in pieces. Stainless steel is durable and good for this even through heavy duty burns.

When all your dishes are put away, use the drying mat to wipe up any water that may have accumulated under and around your mat. Take your washcloth and do a quick scrub to you sink. Use the towel to wipe off your faucet, handles, and the back of the sink. Make everything shine. Place all of your wet items in a pile and gather up any cloth napkins. Take directly to your washer and put inside. It can get washed with the next load of laundry. If you aren't going to be doing laundry the next day, hang up any rags to dry. This will help avoid them smelling like mildew. If they do smell, sprinkle them with some baking soda and let them sit. Then wash normally.

One look back into your kitchen, should bring you peace. Food and dishes should be put away. Everything has been wiped down so there should be no clutter out. The floors swept and clean. Your stove looking sparkly. Everything else should be straightened. If there is anything that looks out of place, fix it. If someone has left something, tell them to come pick it up. If you need to return something, do it now after the end of your day. When you walk away from your kitchen, it should be ready for the next day and all of its demands.