

Getting Organised

Letting Marion choose

I gave Marion the list of available meals, asking her to choose what she wanted. I didn't always have an item ready in the freezer but it did let me know what to cook next. It also let me know what Marion did not want!

Eventually, Marion gave up on this and just wanted me to bring her a selection each week.

I still think it is important to let Marion choose so I do go back to this from time to time.

The folly of stock control

I tried to keep track of every dish going into and out of the freezers but it became an administrative nightmare. Now I do a quick "stock-take" every few weeks to decide what will be included in the next "Big Cook".

Equipment

Make sure you have the equipment ready and working before you start. It's too late to find your blender is broken if you have a gallon of soup to blitz!

Ingredients

Check you have all the ingredients laid out before you start. Nothing worse than heading to the supermarket at 9pm on a cold dark night – just for that vital ingredient!

Preparing ingredients.

Get all the peeling, chopping, measuring done before you start to handle raw meats. This is more efficient and is also much better to reduce the chances of cross-contamination.

Chilling before freezing

I guess this needs no clarification!

Pre-cleaning kitchen

Goes without saying. Clear the decks and clean everything before and after you cook.

Use antibacterial cleaners on your work surfaces.

Wash your hands regularly.

Get rid of any dirty cloths.

Clean-as-you-go

Keep the kitchen safe and clean, give yourself space to work and avoid the tiresome "big-clean" after hours of the "big cook".

Food hygiene training

It may be worth doing an on-line course if you are new to cooking or if you are cooking for others. These are very low cost and not too difficult. It also gives you a certificate once you pass the test!

Pets & Children

I'm not dictating any rules here although I do have a strong opinion!

I'm really just suggesting you take a few moments to consider the risks of pets and children in your kitchen.

There is a lot of hot food, sharp knives and equipment that is a huge distraction to the young, inquisitive mind.

We also need to think about the risk of contamination from children and pets that may not be the cleanest things in your kitchen.

Just saying!