

I am very messy in the kitchen. It is not a twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week problem, because I do clean up after myself. But, if someone were to walk in while I was canning or cooking, that person would have a good reason to think I was a very disorganized and sloppy person.

I suppose that it would be a fair assumption. However, I do not think that it is valid. For one thing, my mess is new every day, often several times a day. If we ate ready-to-serve meals, and if our food came from cans and the supermarket frozen food section, I could agree that a messy kitchen might be the sign of someone who had low standards of neatness or a less than robust work ethic.

But my mess starts right here at home. The compost pail (pig pail these days) fills rapidly when we bring in fresh foods by the pail full. And our homegrown summer meals are just the beginning, because we must can, preserve, freeze, jam, and ferment foods to feed ourselves during the non-growing seasons, so—there may be someone who can accomplish this without making some disorder, but that person does not live in this cabin.

I know some people who are very neat when they can, process vegetables for the freezer, or make jam. I admire that, but I notice that seldom do they operate under the pressure that we do to get something done because another equally important task is waiting. Or, perhaps, I am just making an excuse for lack of organization.

This is all in my mind just now because I made sauerkraut this afternoon. Traditionally, we have made a big batch of this healthful fermented food in the milk house. But, this year, I have been experimenting with sauerkraut that is a little different than the “plain” kind we have usually made in the past, and it is easier to do in smaller containers in the kitchen with the handy slicing/shredding tool called a mandoline.

I am not very neat, and in the process of getting the cabbage, carrots, onions, and garlic ready for the curtido, a type of sauerkraut popular in Latin America, I had cabbage pretty much all over the kitchen. I was really rather surprised that someone did not show up unexpectedly. That does happen regularly. If everything is in order and there are fresh cinnamon rolls on the kitchen counter, nobody comes. If, however, my cinnamon roll dough is running over, I am cleaning up the cat’s regurgitation of a rodent, and the kitchen floor is sticky from making jam, company is the order of the day. My mother used to say that a certain relative from far away and of a fastidious nature usually came without notice when she (my mother) was either dressing chickens or wallpapering.

That did not happen today, fortunately. With a half hour and Runo’s timely appearance with two empty pails, I cleaned up all the spilled cabbage, swept the floor, shook the rugs, did the dishes, and had the sauerkraut in a large glass jar. The plastic bag filled with water held the cabbage mixture nicely in place, and the jar rested comfortably in a pan to hold any overflow of juice as the vegetables ferment.

If someone were to come to the cabin now, I would not have to indicate a path through my mess. But, there are no cinnamon rolls, either, and not even

a stale cookie in the house.