



The Carmen-Sense Guide to the Chaos Free Kitchen

Some things just make sense... at least to me. Many years of food exploration has led me to this list of what makes sense for me in the kitchen, and most importantly, what allows me to really look forward to cooking. I hope it helps you too.

1. Kitchen equipment must-haves:

- **A large chopping (chef) knife.** This makes food prep so much easier and more enjoyable. A small pairing knife just won't do everything. With a substantial knife you will look forward to chopping up those veggies for dinner or to prepare for lunches. You don't have to pay a lot, just keep it sharp, and stored safely. And learn how to keep your fingers out of the way.
- **A LARGE wooden cutting board.** I find I need a board big enough to hold the food I'm chopping as well as the food that has been chopped. And to make working with your big knife that much better. I also like to have another board that is only used for raw meat; so cross-contamination is reduced to a minimum.
- **A small and/or large food processor.** One will do, but I started out with a small 1-litre size, which works superbly for salad dressings and small batches of bean dip or hummus. My larger one gets used a lot for larger batches of dips, making salsa, chopping large amounts of onions, shredding carrots and beets for salads or veggie burgers, mixing ingredients for a pate or burgers, shredding cheese... etc, etc.
- **2-3 silicone spatulas – scoop style.** I didn't have these for the longest time, and I'm not sure how I managed. I usually use at least 2 during meal preps, often more. They go into action for: scrambling eggs, mixing ingredients in a bowl, getting every last bit out of my food processor, stirring ingredients in a pan while sautéing... Besides my beloved wooden spoon, they must be my most-used utensils.
- **3 sizes of heavy-bottom stainless steel pots.** I like the ones with clear lids because I'm nosy and I want to see what's going on inside.
- **2 sizes of frying pans.** I won't specify what type, because I think that's a matter of preference. I like my cast-iron for some things, my stainless steel for others, and occasionally a non-stick pan. Particularly a small non-stick for when I'm cooking solo or heating up leftovers, since I don't have a microwave.



- **2 strainers / colanders.** One larger one for draining pasta, rinsing fruit and veggies etc., and a small mesh one for rinsing small things like quinoa and rice.
- **A veggie peeler with a large comfy handle.** This may not seem essential, but I know my hands are not happy when I have to peel a pile of carrots or beets with a flimsy metal peeler that cuts into me. Give yourself this gift.

2. Practices that make cooking a breeze:

- **Place items in the area you will use them most.** Having cooking utensils and spices by the stove, breakfast items near the mugs and kettle or coffee maker, dishes near the dishwasher, mixing bowls near the food prep area... etc.
- **Have the dishes done and kitchen cleaned before going to bed.** I struggle with this one at times, but it's SO rewarding to come into a clean kitchen in the morning, and feel inspired for another day of food adventures.
- **Have a shelf in your fridge dedicated to leftovers.** This way you can check that shelf first, and avoid growing science experiments that get left there until someone has the courage to throw it out.
- **Have a collection of good-quality storage containers.** This will encourage you to pack a lunch, keep delicious leftovers, and take a snack on road-trips. I like the glass ones with leak-proof snap-on lids. And tiny ones for salad dressings and nuts.
- **Have someone else do the clean-up.** If you don't live alone, it's always nice to have the "I'll cook if you clean" policy in place. If you live alone, you may benefit from inviting friends over more often.
- **Play good music.** This is important for a few reasons... it encourages you to dance and move around more, making you less likely to slouch and get a sore back, it keeps you positive and looking forward to cooking, it infused love into your food, and it allows you to have spontaneous kitchen party dance-offs. Another good reason to invite friends over.

3. Most importantly:

- **Develop a good sense of humour!** You will need it when things go awry 😊