

The Winter Kitchen

The Winter kitchen is probably the coziest place on earth. What pray tell, is not to like about soup bubbling on the stove, spicy apple pies cooling under pressed tea-towels on the counter and candles twinkling on the window-sill?.

Who has not found themselves pulled as if by magnetic force to the kettle over and over again on a chilly afternoon, contemplating in the cozy silence, the domestic bliss of restoring order to the heart of the home with sheets of sliced oranges slowly drying in the oven and cinnamon sticks simmering, long enough to scent the whole house?

Isn't there something rather wonderful about padding around the kitchen in slipper socks, a cardigan draped over our apron and cheeks flushed from pulling cookies from the oven, just in time for icy-faced children coming home from school?

Something so very special about the hours between dusk and dinner, when life seems to slow down to a crawl as darkness descends and we light lamps and allow fairy-lights to twinkle as we chop vegetables, season meat, sing along to the Beatles, and chew over the day with whoever wants to join us at the table.

Of course there is! For the Winter kitchen is an entirely different animal to the Summer kitchen, when we feel the need not to layer the room with all manner of warmth, but to strip it all away!



But for now we long for rich curries and cottage pies with crusts burnt on to the heart-shaped cast iron casserole dishes we treasure for the stories we could tell about all the meals they have held and the conversations we have shared about them. For the bread rising under damp towels and the scent of spicy orange disinfectant we pour into steaming drains.

The Winter Kitchen, then is a place we savour, when finally there is time to really enjoy culinary sanctuary. When meals can be good and wholesome instead of barbecued or too light to really hit the spot. When food can finally be about flavour again.

So we create little plates of ham or good cheese with the chutney created from our Summer's garden produce, and accompany them the kind of rich coffee that seems just right on a snowy morning, standing at the kitchen window admiring the sheer tenacity of what is left in the garden still clinging to lovely life.



“Afterwards, they always had tea in the kitchen, much the nicest room in the house.”

Flora Thompson



There is a difference I think between the excesses of Christmas and the abundance of the Winter Kitchen: in excess we find greed and gluttony and in abundance, certainty and the sanctuary of security. We keep home for the sake of it, not for celebration, enjoy what it is to simply enjoy our homes before the chaos of creating the holiday begins and let ourselves just "be" in a fragrant space, rich in promise of family nourishment

Remind yourself how good it feels to be indulging in the very purpose of our roles as homemakers, nourishing the family with love, candlelight and casserole, and in its making allowing yourself the bliss of quiet moments while spicy cakes bake and fairy-lights twinkle.

Remember what it is then to delight all five of the senses, focus on creating warmth, both actual and emotional, for isn't it true that there is always love baked into a tray of pastries pulled from the oven?

Going back to the basics of the country kitchen is the way forward in Winter: to the busy embodiment of the bustling Farmer's wife or the Head Housekeeper of the Victorian Manor House and even in our terribly modern age, there is no shame in allowing oneself to truly embrace what it is to be a homemaker capable of turning flour into fancy and eggs into works of art just because we can. No need to apologise for simply wanting to be home, lingering over a Brown Betty full of tea, while the birds feed from a china cup full of seed on a snow-covered table and we accompany Edith Piaf as she insists she regrets nothing.

This then is the Winter Kitchen, A place to settle and nibble on all the little somethings we have time to rustle up in the kitchen. A place where there is real reward in routine and ritual for there are so few distractions, beyond the book we are currently enjoying and the tick of the oven timer,

This m'darlings is home.





Make Your Kitchen Inviting...

In order to make the Winter kitchen as inviting as possible, focusing on the five senses is key...

Sight: When you aren't cooking keep the light as low as possible, and rely on candlelight at the table in the evening.

Sound: Have a docking station permanently in the kitchen and you will never be without cozy playlists or comforting morning radio.

Touch: Make sure there are spots of warmth on cold floors by utilising rugs wherever you find yourself standing to cook.

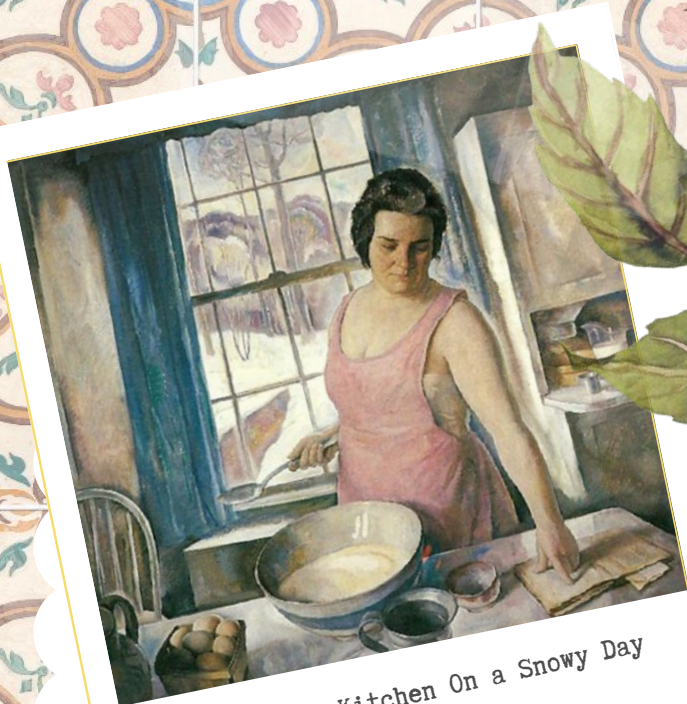
Scent: Use a citrus base for your washing up liquid, surface spray and diffuser to keep the kitchen fragrance harmonious.

Taste: Inspire tastebuds by having bowls of tangerines and trays full of hot chocolate accoutrements as reminder of the season.



“No one who cooks, cooks alone. Even at her most solitary, a cook in the kitchen is surrounded by generations of cooks past, the advice and menus of cooks present, the wisdom of cookbook writers..”

Laurie Colwin



A Toasty Kitchen On a Snowy Day
by N.C. Wyeth

Cozy Kitchen Do's and Don'ts!

Cozy Do's

Do put the kitchen at the heart of your domestic routine.

Always clean it first.

Regularly practise a clutter cull. When the stuff of life goes on in the kitchen, clutter accumulates fast so be certain to keep an eye of paper piles and all that doesn't belong in the kitchen

Do mark the passage of the day by having alternate light sources to change the mood as necessary.

Cozy Don'ts

Don't use "coziness" as an excuse to abandon good hygiene.

Don't cover surfaces with magnets, paper clutter (including children's art!) as it curls and yellows quickly and contributes to a sense of shambolic chaos. Be discerning,

Don't keep every kitchen appliance you own out on your counter unless you use it daily. Everything else, should, if at all possible be out of sight and dust free.



The Brocante Winter Kitchen Blend

6 drops of Cinnamon + 3 drops of Sweet Orange
+ 2 drops of Cloves



Twelve Steps To A Cozy Kitchen

I Begin by banishing as much of the clutter you have currently got littering the kitchen: really going to town on making sure that each and every surface is as clean as can be.

Then when it is possible to do so, clean your little heart out, scrub the sink till it gleams, wipe down tiles, shine appliances and mop the floor. Then open the kitchen window, close the door and allow this lovely room to breathe for an hour or two, while you sit down with a cuppa.

2 Now consider how you want your kitchen to smell. Perhaps of nostalgia: warm apple pies and vanilla custard? Spiced with cinnamon, cloves and star anise? Or citrus fresh with lemons, lime and sweet orange? Decide now on your signature scent for the cosiest room in the kitchen and mix up a blend of three aromatherapy oils ready to fragrance your homemade surface cleaner, sink scrub and drain wash. Thereafter inspect your existing collection of cleaners and banish the truly toxic because you deserve better than chemicals flavouring your food!

3

Now consider all the lighting sources available to you: something possible in even the tiniest of kitchens. While good lighting is essential to make sure you don't set fire to your apron or chop your fingers off, when dinner is finished there is something rather blissful about sitting at a kitchen table lit only by candles. Think then of fairy lights, and lanterns, table lamps which can look incredible on windowsills and far flung counter corners, candleabras, under cupboard and appliance lighting, and even the kind of tiny plug lights that can light your way towards midnight feasts...



4

If you are going to be comfortable in the kitchen in the Winter, it helps to have a warm, dedicated "Kitchen Wardrobe" - Wear a denim apron, have a cosy cardigan hanging on the back of the door and keep a pair of rubber soled "cooking slippers" in the kitchen so that you don't transfer spills or grease throughout the house after long baking sessions, and can go in and out to the garden as and when necessary.





Go online candle shopping for something either un-fragranced or that compliments the signature fragrance you have chosen for the kitchen.

5 If you are going to be burning something daily it would be best to ensure that you choose either soy or beeswax so you aren't adding toxins to your kitchen and you should also choose something that is easily available for repeat order. Real comfort comes in doing the same things daily and that includes burning the same candles at the same time...

6 Next let's consider our kitchen linens. While it is good housekeeping practise to own a selection of tea-towels for various different jobs, we can also bring texture, colour and warmth into the kitchen with pot-holders, rag rugs, knitted dishcloths, oven-gloves, net bags for storage and pretty drawstring bags for kitchen laundry (which should be washed separately from the rest of your laundry if only because it is often so greasy!). So consider how you can utilise knobs and hooks to add a little more cosy texture to your Winter kitchen and craft or buy a few new additions...

7

Make a project out of creating a few dedicated kitchen playlists for different tasks you complete daily. Create different moods for baking, morning coffee, thorough scrubs and family mealtimes and try to really ring the changes as you debate what mood you want to be inspiring.

While it might seem to be something rather trivial, creating playlists like this comes to be associated in your mind with the task in hand and truly helps you to shift gears and embrace life in the Winter kitchen.

Next consider how you can create seasonal culinary winks around the kitchen, so that you can nourish your mind with a sense of abundance in what is in Nature, a time of scarcity.

8

So fill bowls with one type of fruit each (our minds eye sees abundance when it doesn't have to make sense of variety), create a Night-Time beverage Station with cocoa, malted drinks, hot chocolate, syrups, foam toppers and marshmallows and line up mason jars full of nuts and savoury nibbles.

Hibernation is all the lovelier for knowing we have so many goodies available to us...





Arrange a stack of Winter themed cookbooks on a shelf or windowsill.

9

Look for those books focused on soup and stew recipes or true comfort food, like hot puddings, warm curries, and homemade bread.

If you don't own anything truly Wintery then consider adding a new book to your recipe book collection, though I always recommend taking a few contestants out of the library before committing to an actual purchase, as you can decide whether you will actually ever get around to cooking the recipes first before you buy!

Next let's bring the kitchen alive!

10

Think scrumptiously fragrant forced hyacinths in mossy terracotta pots and cut crystal glasses with teeny paper-whites slowly blooming on the windowsill.

Add rows of fragrant herbs and a jar of lemon daffodils, let English Ivy wrap its way along the window-ledge and keep a jug of dried branches on the kitchen table to decorate with fairylights and hearts.

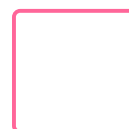
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Shopping time! Head out to the shops and treat yourself to a tiny collection of nibbles, kitchen accessories and other treats. Think flavoured olive oil and kind of rich chocolate you have to shave into gorgeous curls.

Look for the perfect corkscrew, or wooden spoon, buy eco-friendly sink sponges and posh washing up liquid. Go to an antiques store and seek out a terracotta jar just right for holding utensils, or treat yourself to a dramatic candelabra for adding drama to meals in a candlelit kitchen. Anything that rings the changes and layers your Winter Kitchen in love.

I2

Finally head home and putter your way to Winter Kitchen joy. Add all the ingredients for a warming stew into your slow cooker and while it cooks really throw yourself into re-inventing your kitchen for the season. Hang out freshly pressed linens, pour Winter spiced Zoflora down the sink and lay the table with the prettiest tablecloth you own, adding candles and a jug of flowers. Remind yourself how cosy life in the kitchen really can be and enjoy a meal with those you love right there in the very heart of your home.



Puttery Kitchen Treats

- * Mark the end of your evening kitchen clean up by lighting a "Kitchen-Sink" candle as an act of domestic gratitude for the end of the day (and a great way to banish lingering cooking smells!)
 - * Have a pair of kitchen slippers available so the bare feet used to cozy rugs and carpets in the rest of the house don't go blue when they find themselves on cold kitchen tiles.
 - * Have a produce basket on the counter so that when your vegetable box arrives you can just pop the abundance of veggies straight in, and won't lose them to the back of the fridge, while adding colour and a sense of bounty to your cozy kitchen.
 - * Seek out a Cast-Iron Plant (the *Aspidistra Elatior*). Able to adapt to the ever-changing atmosphere of the kitchen, this hardy plant will almost look after itself and will bring lovely evergreen life to a room that can too often feel sterile.
 - * Spend an hour or two covering your favorite cookbooks in oilcloth or vintage sticky plastic, both to protect them and add a riot of lovely pattern to your kitchen bookshelf or window-ledge.
 - * The well-equipped (and deliciously tactile!) kitchen has a "wardrobe" of good quality, well cared for tea-towels: from linen for glass, to cotton-waffle for general cooking and cleaning tasks, and of course towelling for hands.
 - * Keep your eyes out for a good old-fashioned, quality sweeping brush. While it is traditional to have a hand-held sweep and pan in the kitchen, having a proper long-handled brush is easier on your back and quite the quickest way to make the kitchen feel spick and span in a jiffy. (So much of homemaking is all in the mind!)
 - * Channel the kitchens of Victorian manor houses with baskets, terracotta, mason jars and piles of pressed white napkins. Remember that organised doesn't have to feel sterile and there is beauty in utility!
- Give up traditional kitchen sponges (which go horribly slimy!) in favour of
- * crocheted string scrubbers which take minutes to knit up, add texture to your space and do the job just as well. Find a [great pattern here...](#)



My Cozy Kitchen Routine

I want my Winter Kitchen To Feel...

Each Morning I Will... :



And Every Evening I Will...





My Cozy Kitchen Routine

In my Winter Kitchen I want to feel...



The room will be
fragranced by:

And the room will always...

I will make myself feel
organised by:

And I will honour my
family by:

Cozy Recipes

TITLE

Spicy Festive Cookies

PREP TIME

20 Minutes

TOTAL TIME

5 to 8 Minutes

NOTES

With all the taste of Christmas, these simple cookies are just right for festive evenings with a cup of strong coffee

INGREDIENTS

I/2 Cup of Maple Syrup

I/2 Cup of Butter/Margarine

I/2 Cup of Light Brown Sugar

I tsp Cinnamon + I tsp Ginger

I Tsp Powdered Cloves

I TBsp Dark Rum

I Tsp Baking Soda

2 I/2 Cups of All Purpose/ Plain
Flour

METHOD

Combine the first three ingredients in a saucepan and boil until melted. Add the next five ingredients, and remove from heat.

Allow to cool to lukewarm, then slowly add the flour. Chill in the fridge, then roll out thinly and cut into festive shapes.

Bake on greased cookie sheets until golden and enjoy warm.

Cozy Recipes

TITLE

PREP TIME

COOKING TIME

NOTES

INGREDIENTS

METHOD

