

Cooking and control

I haven't added all of the bloggers I read yet. Some of the first ones I added, though, were food bloggers.

I like food. I like cooking. I enjoy changing something from a mass of random ingredients into something that makes people happy when they eat it. Sometimes I fail, but generally what I make turns out pretty well. My bread is good, both in looks and in taste. There is one exception – I seem to have issues making whole wheat bread in loaf pans. What comes out is fondly referred to as ass bread. It tastes perfect, but it looks like it has, well, cleavage. I've decided I like making rye bread better anyway. I will eventually figure out how to make whole wheat bread that looks as good as it tastes. Hopefully.

I started cooking from cookbooks. I always got the same result. I like consistency. Nice, chewy consistency for bread, thick smooth consistency for Cream of Wheat...sorry, couldn't help it. Xander cooks by feel. He puts in a little of this, a little of that, and the food never comes out the same way twice. It is almost always good, though. Learning to cook his way gave me the courage to try to do it myself.

It amuses me how scary it is to walk into the kitchen with nothing more than an idea. I like to know what I'm getting, even if it never really works that way in the rest of life. I am learning, though, how to just play. I started this weekend with a general idea for lunches for the week – elk sausage, brown rice, and veggies. Good, but bland. Xander added in cheese, since we had some in the fridge, and turned it into a casserole-like dish rather than the stir fry kind I had been envisioning. It didn't bother me. In the past, it might have. I knew what I wanted to make and it was going to be good. Now, though, I'm becoming more flexible. It's ok to change things part of the way through. I'm not following a recipe anyway.

I'm making it up based on what we have in the freezer and refrigerator. I can't easily go find a recipe that has certain ingredients and expect it to only have ingredients that I have available. I have been learning to relax.

I'm a control freak. I try not to be overbearing about it, but I don't like surprises. I don't like unexpected schedule changes, frantic rushing around because someone forgot to deal with something despite having a lot of time to do it earlier, or not being able to finish something that is important to me. I don't like change very much.

I started getting over that a little bit when I learned to drive. I'd go wander, stop anywhere that looked interesting, and not have much of a plan. The first few times were really hard, because I wanted to plan out everything. Eventually, though, I'd just pick a direction and go, see whatever there was to see, and not have the day marked out in my head in segmented blocks of time. That was the beginning of freedom. Cooking seems to be the second step. I may always want things scheduled and predictable, but I am learning to enjoy a lack of boundaries, too.

I think boundaries have helped me feel safe. I grew up in a neighborhood that wasn't the best. It wasn't awful by any stretch of the imagination, especially with all of the local dogs to deter certain people, but by the time I was eight everyone avoided the park down the street after dark. We had schedules for my little brother, schedules for schoolwork (although these were somewhat loose), and schedules to make sure everyone got where they needed to go on time. They weren't written out, at least not that I remember, but they created the framework for my childhood. If I stayed in the lines, kept to the schedule, I would stay safe.

Once I started public school I made schedules for homework and classes and swimming and backpacking and everything I could think of because it made order out of chaos. I was terrified

for the first few years of high school that I would miss something important because I was so overwhelmed. Home school is not the best preparation for a high school with 1,600 students, however nice they happen to be.

I like my boundaries, but between driving and cooking, I have learned to open up more to the possibilities of unexpected joys. I belly dance now, which I would not have even considered ten years ago, being an impressive klutz. I'm learning to make costumes, wear makeup for performances, and, soon, to make flowers for my hair, which will be fun. I'm taking more chances. I'm trying things even when they scare me.

I made food without looking at a recipe, and it was good. Seems like it shouldn't be a big deal, but some days it still is.