

Clean as you go

I used to live in a cooperative house. That was when I was in college in the Midwest. Us kids, we used to move off campus, because we didn't want to be taken care of; then we would move into cooperative houses, so we would be taken care of. 20 somethings.

We all had chores and we would sign up for chores weekly. Some chores were more difficult so they would be worth two points, whereas other chores would be easier and only worth one point. Cooking was two points. Cleaning up after the meal was worth two points.

There was one kid who lived with us who loved to cook. He would cook and use every single dish, pot and utensil in the kitchen.

Remember, this is a *cooperative* house, which means everyone who moved in would bring their favorite kitchen stuff and leave it there (probably because it was not in such good shape after everyone had used it with reckless abandon).

In other words, when this one kid would cook there was lots of stuff to use. And he used it all. And he washed none of it, why should he? I mean, someone else is going to clean up, right? He likes cooking, and they like cleaning!

I also liked cooking and did not like cleaning, so I also signed up to cook. But I signed up to clean after my own cooking! That way I could clean up after myself. With 20/20 hindsight I am amazed that I was that smart! I cooked, and cleaned up as I went, spending less time on chores than most of my house-mates!

One of my house mates – Joey – always... well – as long as I am reminiscing I have to tell you about Joey. He was about 10 years older than me, and seemed to know everything. One time I was changing the oil in my car. Now, you have to know I'm the kind of mechanic: if I lift the hood (or even think about lifting the hood) I get covered with grease.

Joey came out clean, showered, dressed for a party. I said I was having trouble taking out the bolt at the bottom of the engine to drain the oil. Joey lay down, slid under the car, took out the bolt, came back up and wiped off the tips of his fingers on a kleenex! That was Joey!

Anyway, Joey may have taught me more about cooking and kitchen work than anyone else (except my mom) with one line: "Always leave a place just a little better than you found it".

Joey, wherever you are (and I hope you are well) thanks for that! It's been a truly remarkable gift for quite a long while!