

Mike and Logan

Mike and Logan are a couple living together in Brooklyn, NY. They are in their mid twenties. Mike is a creative professional and Logan is in law school. I observed them make dinner for about a half-dozen people. They started cooking immediately after I arrived so I interviewed them while they were cooking.

6:40 pm

What are you making?

L: Chicken, mashed sweet potato, and brussel sprouts with bacon.

(to mike) We should make a marinade!

Are you following a recipe?

L: I looked at epicurious [epicurious.com] earlier this evening, but I didn't write anything down. Epicurious is my source for inspiration.

There is some discussion over whether one of the guests will be vegetarian, but they are unsure if she will be coming to dinner. They decide that they should cook some brussel sprouts without bacon.

Could I have some water?

L: Sure, we don't have a britta though. Is that weird? We don't have a britta.

(To mike) Is Tze coming?

M: I dunno, I talked to him at 5.

How often do you cook?

L: 4 times a week. I do most of the cooking because Mike usually gets home around 8--much later than I do. Sometimes I'll cook something big for dinner and lunch the next day. Noodles and tofu or something like that.

M: We make very similar things.

L: Yeah, we have very similar tastes; we're not specialized in the kitchen.

While Logan has been talking to me she has taken some spices from a spice rack and arranged them around a glass baking dish on the island. She puts some oil in the dish and then adds spices. She then takes packaged chicken from the refrigerator (which is right behind her) opens it with a knife, and begins to arrange the chicken in the pan. Mike has washed the sweet potatoes is now peeling them in the corner between the sink and the refrigerator.

Tze has arrived.

L: *(Asking everyone)* Should the chicken pieces be touching each other?

Someone replies "no."

L: Handling chicken is weird.

Are you afraid of germs?

L: No, not at all. I don't do like Mario Batali. I heard he'll lick his fingers after touching raw chicken and they'll have to edit it out because it's encouraging reckless behavior. I do, however, throw out food all the time. I really don't like the idea of something going bad in the refrigerator, so I'm very quick to throw stuff out.

So you watch cooking shows?

L: We watch Iron Chef, the Food Network.

Logan puts the marinated chicken in the refrigerator and gets a slice of cheese and some sausages.

I'm going to eat a piece of cheese...

L: *(To mike)* How about you slice mint and I'll do the potatoes?

M: Ok

L: Mike's really good at chopping and I'm not. Apparently I'm better at peeling though.

Do you listen to music?

L: Always

Do you use cookbooks?

L: When we're cooking for big groups.

M: I don't use cookbooks.

L: We have a routine down. We cook the same recipes over and over again. We'll have pork-chops, like, once a week. We make the best pork-chops. Actually, I'll use a cookbook if I have something that requires a lot of steps that need to go in order. Like lasagna, you have to put the layers down in order, and I need a recipe to tell me what order.

Mike starts to talk to Tze and I about a painting that's on the wall above the dining table. Logan turns on the heat under a saucepan.

(To mike) Do I need to put oil in the pan to cook the sausage?

M: No

L: What do you want to listen to mike?

M: I dunno. Munamana?

L: You know what you should invent; that already exists? A non slip cutting board. *(The cutting board is slipping on the counter while she cuts something).*

M: Or a mandolin that won't cut off your fingers.

L: Yeah if you're a professional you have to wear a chainmail glove when you use one. But no one uses those.

M: Can I tell you about the worst kitchen accident ever? *Mike proceeds to tell us about a horrifying kitchen*

accident that happened to a friend of a friend.

He then goes to remove the sausages and burns his fingers trying to take the sausage out with his hands. Logan gets a fork and uses it to remove the sausages.

Why do you cook?

L: I like cooking because it gives me something to do. I always like to be doing something. Also, I feel like its part of having a home. It makes me feel like I live here. You know, when you move in with someone, it helps that bond. We eat together during the week, we cook together. Every weekend we have 4-6 people over and cook them dinner. Plus we can't afford to eat out.

(To Mike) Should I put anything in the sweet potatoes?

M: Port?

L: Port?

M: Yeah how bad could it be?

Mike gets some port out of a cabinet and pours some in the pot with the mashed sweet potatoes. Logan gets out some brown sugar and adds it.

8:25pm: *The chicken is ready and removed from the oven.*

More people arrive. Andrew and peter. Mike chats with them.

Is there anything in the kitchen that you never use?

L: No.

Is there anything you always use?

L: The rice cooker. I love the rice cooker.

Is there anything you love but rarely use?

L: The popcorn popper. Do you want to see it? It's beautiful.

She shows me a high-quality stovetop popcorn popper that looks new.

Do you like to cook with other people?

L: I usually cook alone. I don't really like help.

Is the kitchen a social place?

L: Yes definitely, but its social between everyone who is standing around the island. I wish the island was bigger, then more people could stand around it.

Peter (*Peter is in the kitchen*) : You know what would be great? If you could just put your dishes in the sink and they'd be clean.

L: I'd like something that could make things cold quickly; like a microwave in reverse. Often we'll have to chill some wine in the freezer and that's a pain. It still takes too long.

P: I don't like shopping. There's too many options. I always forget something that I need and I buy stuff that I will never eat. Granted I never make a list.














