

What's in your kitchen?

Do you watch any cooking shows? Are you impressed with the kitchen layout and efficiency of activities? I'm always impressed and a bit intimidated. Behind each cook is a support team for planning, preparation, clean-up, lighting and more. What in their kitchens or actions make a difference?

If I was a host for a cooking show, I'd likely attract the science crowd. My actions would promote food safety and encourage efficiency, especially as it relates to food systems and composting. I would need a big support team.

Below is a potential script.

Setting: counters have basic kitchen equipment: knives, cutting board, mixer, toaster; plastic container for produce scraps, sink in view

Script for host:

Welcome to my kitchen. Let me introduce you to at least one fun-guy in my kitchen. No, this is not a person, but actual fungi. Fungi is one of the many things growing in my kitchen. Don't be alarmed, there is a purpose!

(Host points to plastic container with produce scraps): Each day my family consumes a variety of fruits and vegetables. Peels, stems, seeds and shells are deposited in this container which is later deposited into my backyard compost. Bacteria and fungi start breaking down cellulose and other complex molecules.

Once in the compost pile, the heat will increase as organism populations increase. Millions of bacteria will continue the gradual breakdown of organic materials into rich, dark, crumbly humus.

A trick for producing compost is to always bury the food items in the pile. Exposed food items will attract flies and other vermin. I use the compost on houseplants and outdoor plants to provide nutrients.

Another type beneficial bacteria and yeast in my kitchen is a sour dough starter. My daughter has been experimenting with this process. It takes time to feed and maintain sourdough starter as microbial growth is encouraged over time.

As you can see, fungi, bacteria and yeast can be a part of your kitchen!

For practical resources about composting and food safety related to sour dough, please contact K-State Research and Extension Cowley County at 620-221-5450.

Source: Making Compost, A Beginner's Guide, Ward Upham

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