

order. balance. beauty.

Places, everyone!

Organization and the creative mind

Marin Rose

I shared a wonderful article this week on Facebook, aiming to spread the word that even creative types – especially creative types, in fact – can benefit from an organized approach to life.

Dan Charnas' post for the NPR blog "The Salt" is called, "For a More Ordered Life, Organize Like a Chef." The story explores the layered meanings of the cooking world's No. 1 motto: *mise en place*. At face value, the phrase reminds chefs to have everything ready and in place before the cooking process begins. On a deeper level, it's a life code, the chef's equivalent of the organizer's "A place for everything and everything in its place."

"Some cooks call it their religion. It helps them coordinate vast amounts of labor and material, and transforms the lives of its practitioners through focus and self-discipline."

If you're like me – though you're probably not, since my kitchen is entirely my husband's domain – you might not have appreciated that culinary professionals, generally known for late nights, short employment terms and a sometimes challenging artistic sensibility, are actually an extremely disciplined bunch. And, of course, that makes sense in the kitchen. There's no way to serve up a quality product *en masse* without a high degree of organization. What's surprising is the common application among cooks of "*mise en place*" to their lives beyond the kitchen.

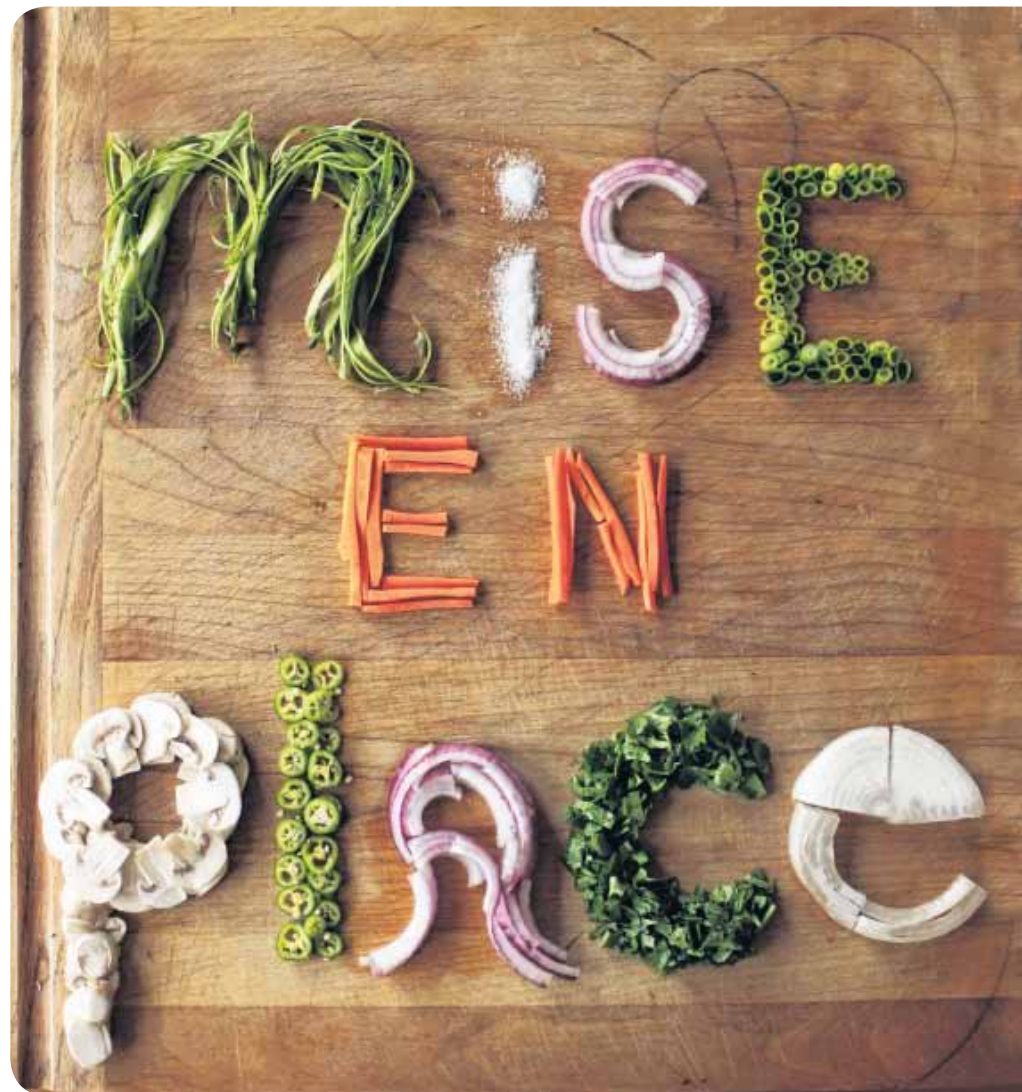
"I know people that have it tattooed on them," says Melissa Gray, a senior at the Culinary Institute of America. "It really is a way of life... it's a way of concentrating your mind to only focus on the aspects that you need to be working on at that moment, to kind of rid yourself of distractions."

Creative types too often cite their unique, non-linear way of thinking as an excuse for a lack of order and planning. Certainly there's room for different approaches and I admire those who prioritize spontaneity over plodding routine. I admit that I still struggle, when I arrive home at day's end, with the impulse to go through the mail before satisfying an urgent hunger or a desperate thirst. We all have our challenges. But if chefs swear by the "*mise en place*" lifestyle then the proof is in the pudding.

Creativity is a gift, but it's one that needs focusing if it's to find a successful outlet. Proper planning and accountability separate the "flakes" from the pros.

Could you use some clarity in your life? A little more focus? Increased efficiency for increased free time? Are your kids' talents thwarted by their lack of focus? Get the whole family organized – and get cooking.

Questions for Marin? Inquire at info@libraorganizing.com for a response in next month's column.



Marin Rose owns *Libra Organizing*, an Augusta-based organizing, home staging and move assistance business. Marin serves clients throughout the CSRA, as well as in her hometown of Washington, D.C., New York and beyond. For more information, including notices of free seminars and community events, or to hire Marin to speak at your event or organization, visit libraorganizing.com.