

Manifesting her Home

by karelia

A visit to a quirky yet functional kitchen.

The Quirky Kitchen

Chapter 1 of 1

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You enter through the opening of a blue wall...not that you pay attention to that little detail...close to the wall that exudes a summery, rosy pink, which your eyes only just notice in passing. You're immediately absorbed by the soft sounds of Schubert's "Ave Maria" coming somewhere from the right, and after being overwhelmed by an explosion of not only colours but things and emotions and some je-ne-sais-quoi, your eyes fall on a humongous enamel sink placed in the centre of the wall opposite the entrance, right in front of a very large window behind a very wide window sill. The sudden, rather wild tones of Mozart's 20th piano concerto capture your attention, but only momentarily.

The enamel sink is truly large enough for a small adult to bathe in, though one would hope this type of activity be confined to a more private bathroom setting, for this kitchen is a true country kitchen where neighbours walk in and out all day long for a cup of tea, to borrow a pound of flour, to exchange recipes or the latest gossip, to barter cheese for eggs, or to just rest for five minutes before weeding the next vegetable patch in their own gardens. When it's not the neighbourhood, it's the knitting circle that meets weekly, for this is The Quirky Kitchen, and one can't help but accept any invitation one can get one's hands on. Many a village dweller took up knitting *just* to have an excuse to visit The Quirky Kitchen; entire families have moved to the village just to proudly announce to friends, extended family, and even mere acquaintances that they live within walking distance of The Quirky Kitchen. Rumour has it that readings are held in this kitchen with famous authors reading their own works, but only the honourable owner could answer that, and she isn't the most talkative of women. Any attempts to coax such information out of her far more social husband have led nowhere; he refers to his wife reverently as *the goddess* and willingly, happily even, accepts the status of matriarchal home, in which he plays an important second violin. Whilst you ponder, Mozart gives way to Sibelius's fifth symphony, and your eyes rest you don't know where, and you allow yourself to appreciate the aural treat.

Your eyes open again and focus on the kitchen. The white enamel sink is sparkly clean, though some dish is waiting to be cleaned, and you suspect it is a perpetual feature. Then you look above and behind the sink and discover a window sill large enough to house a big bottom if it were an empty sill. Instead, it houses an entire kitchen garden in various containers ranging from small copper to large terracotta, from herbs such as parsley, rosemary, or lovage, to what one would commonly refer to as weeds, such as nettles or dandelions, to outrageously shamelessly growing vegetables who pretend to be too delicate to cope with the harsh northern climate and are now busy preening, proudly carrying almost ripe fruit while at the same time displaying flowers swooning in the light breeze that comes through the slightly open window. You can almost hear them purr, "There, air, pollinate me! Make love to me, and I will give you beautiful offspring!"

Out of the explosion of colour and things and emotions and that je-ne-sais-quoi you still can't put your finger on, you suddenly begin to see a theme. There, bang in the middle amidst herbs and weeds and vegetables, rests a white ceramic pot, delicate forget-me-nots painted onto it with a careful hand, that houses the littlest rose bush you've ever laid eyes on. It proudly shows off tiny buds in the most gentle pink, so gentle you could almost mistake it for an off-white. You want to rub your hands in anticipation, for the buds promise to grow into the most spectacular blooms any time now, but with a pang you realise you probably won't be in this location when they do.

Your eyes flicker to the right of that humongous sink and sill and window contraption and rest on the type of fridge you've never seen before, one with three doors, and only on a second take do you discover it's three "under-counter" fridges cleverly placed next to each other, and while you wonder why, your eyes wander to the wall above said fridges, and you'll know exactly why.

There, on that wall space above those under-the-counter refrigerators, hangs the most charming pin wall you've ever seen. It's not cork. It's a cut-apart, then cleverly sewn-together result of a felted fair-isle cardigan, buttons included, in an explosive cottage garden colour scheme coming straight out of a Kaffe Fassett book, full of pins holding down little white notes that say in black, bold writing, *Wednesday: Knitting!*, and *Don't forget to order raw milk by Monday midnight* and *Gerry: Wedding Sat 11am at Unmentionable Church. Don't forget cake!*, and *Shear appointment for Daisy and Woolly: Tuesday 16:00*.

Once your eyes are sated by this symphony of colour and boldness, they skim towards the third wall. And all there is is wall. Plastered with roses. White roses on the white wall, pink roses with pale-green stems and leaves, red roses, purple roses, dark-red roses, deep-pink roses, apricot roses, friendship-yellow roses, roses-so-dark-red-you-think-it's-black roses, rose roses, climbing roses, trailing roses. In short, a rhapsody of roses, all on one short wall. You take a deep breath. That's a lot of roses. That's a lot of colours. And you begin to understand the theme.

Your eyes continue to the blue wall, perhaps for some relief, perhaps for more inspiration, for now you can't wait to explore the rest of this kitchen.

And you are met with more theme, with more explosions of colour. There, on this wider wall in vibrant blue, you see shelves. Not ordinary shelves, no. The lower part of the wall is home to sleepers. How they are fixed to the wall is anyone's guess, but they are there, safe and sound, and you can't help but admire what's on them. Cast iron pans and pots in orange, red, cream, white, interspersed with plain stainless-steel pots and pans. A couple of shelves up, the sleepers are replaced with what looks like the stems of pine trees, and they, too, are covered with useful kitchen items. Plates of all sizes with flowers of all kinds and bowls of the same ilk. All interrupted by the opening to the hallway, but you're not ready to walk through there quite yet, for there is still another wall to explore.

Your eyes come to rest on the pink wall. And wander inevitably to the oversized Aga occupying the centre of most of the wall, surrounded by actual cupboards framed with oak doors that look as if they're cut straight out of trees. The Aga gurgles impressively as you inspect it closer, though nothing but a kettle of water is resting on top of it. Then you realise the music has changed to the "Blue Danube," and you sway along with it for a moment or two.

You gather your courage and open one of the cupboards for a quick peek. The sap sticking to your hand confirms that this particular oak was taken straight from the tree, though you're impressed with the precision each packet of flour, each jar of lentils and other dry staples, each jar of jam is fitted into the space.

Before you leave, you want to take in the entire room, so you turn around. And you see the table in the centre of the kitchen. Reclaimed wood of dubious origin, obviously put together with nuts and bolts and not looking particularly stable, yet obviously there for years past and years to come, and all clean and tidy. Surrounded by an oak corner bench taken straight out of a Bavarian dream kitchen and lots of chairs, none of which match, and to top it off, all with individual cushions, some knitted, some crocheted, some sewn. Looking at them in one sweep, they form the spectrum of the rainbow.

You look at that table and the bench and the chairs, and you imagine fat, thin, soft, hard, extended, intended, expressive, and impressive bottoms to sit on those chairs, and wish you'd never have to leave.

Finally, you turn away and walk through the door where you stop momentarily to absorb an impression of the adjacent living room. But that is for another day.

A/N: Grateful thanks to Teaoli for the beta and so much more.

One evening, Teaoli asked for an image of a "quirky but functional kitchen." She had found me some awesome cottage garden pictures a day or two before, and I was keen on returning the favour. Well, I'm really not so good at finding images on the web. I tried, but found nothing that met with *my* idea of quirky and functional. Soon enough, the Muse put images in my head, though, and I wrote them down. And somehow, it all morphed into the idea of creating a home.