



technique

HOUSING GUIDE

Volume 106, Issue 15
February 5, 2021 // Nique.net

Transforming your dorm into a kitchen

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Cooking as a college student can be very challenging — not only is it hard to find the time, energy and financial means to consistently cook nutritious and tasty meals, many Tech students must share a communal kitchen with limited space for storing ingredients and supplies. While dining halls offer a nice alternative, navigating the selection with dietary restrictions or nutritional concerns can make them less attractive alternatives. Instead, here are some tips to make cooking for yourself in your dorm room easy, while not breaking the bank!

GATHER YOUR SUPPLIES

Start by collecting the essentials for cooking. Having a mini-fridge and microwave in your dorm room, while not imperative, allows you to store more perishable goods, boil water and prepare more meals. If you plan on using a communal kitchen, make sure you bring a food tray to hold your ingredients, dishes and utensils. This makes it much easier to carry everything you need to the kitchen, as well as bring dirty dishes

to a sink. One or two sets of utensils, a measuring cup, bowl, plate, pot, pan and spatula are all good starting points and can be used to make practically any dish. For clean-up, bring dish soap and a few towels. Bring a Tupperware container to store leftovers so you can save food for later. Also, check all your supplies are microwave safe and can withstand some wear and tear.

RELY ON THE BASICS

Having a few solid essentials that you can rely on eases some of the stress of deciding what to cook. For breakfasts, some ideas include oatmeal, instant grits, granola or other cereals, frozen or dried fruits and nuts. For lunch or dinners, pasta, frozen vegetables and fresh vegetables with a longer shelf-life, like sweet potatoes or carrots, are all easy options. To make sure your meals have some protein, tuna

or salmon packets and canned beans are great choices.

For a quick meal, cous-cous is ready in a matter of minutes. Having a back-up frozen meal, such as a veggie burger is also a great choice. For perishables, make a few trade-offs so that food goes stale slower. Even if you do eat dairy, getting almond milk may be wiser, since it keeps for much longer than regular milk. Eggs can be stored in a refrigerator for weeks at a time and are good both by themselves and as ingredients for baked goods. Tortillas can be just as versatile as sliced bread and eaten for all meals. For snacks, hummus and crackers, trail mix and granola bars are great for on the go.

SEASON YOUR FOOD

Eating unseasoned and plain meals every night gets boring, but you can elevate any dish to the next level by seasoning it with a variety of spices, condiments and toppings. Some basic ideas of what to bring include salt and pepper, ketchup or mustard, cinnamon, sugar, peanut butter or Nutella, olives, Sriracha sauce, sun-dried tomatoes, olive oil, honey, basil or a salad dressing of your choice.

SHOP WISELY

Ideally, try to purchase all of your non-perishable goods before or during moving in to campus to reduce the amount of food you must buy later. That way, if you want to shop at stores around campus (such as Publix),

you can just purchase perishables. If you don't have access to a car, make sure to bring reusable grocery bags that you can comfortably walk to and from a store with. Plan in advance exactly what you need to purchase to save yourself time and money and refrain from buying anything you won't end up needing.

GET CREATIVE

If you have a dining plan, grab a piece of fruit from the dining hall to eat as a snack later in the day. There is almost always free or discounted food on campus for college students. Load up on food where you can. Try finding new inspiration online for dishes you could make.

College plant mom's guide to raising flora

Maya Torres

Assistant Life Editor

So you just checked housing guidelines and apparently you can't bring your favorite pet to school with you. That sucks, but you can instead invest in some leafy green friends to keep you company during the long hours of studying in your hall. Plants in dorm rooms can be tricky. Typically, a small room with bright sunlight can get pretty complicated, as most plants don't like too much direct light. Keeping them watered is another issue, especially when there's not a readily accessible sink nearby. But fear not — there are plenty of dorm friendly plants that can brighten up your living space.

CONSIDER YOUR OPTIONS

It's important to research

your new plant friend before placing it in your dorm. Plants that need lots of light can sit happily on your windowsill, but others may start to wilt and yellow with too much sun exposure. Plants, such as bamboo, aloe and cacti are sturdy and easy to maintain. A succulent will be very content to bask in the sun. A bamboo or flower should sit a little further away from those direct rays of light.

WATER AS NEEDED

Next, research how much and how often to water them. Some plants like to keep their soil moist all the time. Others don't mind having a dry pot. It's easy to make assumptions, but this may damage your plant in the long run. Even within the

same family, different species of plant have different needs. A pin-cushion cactus needs dry, gritty soil, while a Christmas cactus needs a little more water. It helps to have a designated cup to water your plants. Every time your plant needs water - this could be every few days or every few weeks - fill this cup in the water fountain or bathroom sink, and pour gently over the soil. It's okay to approximate how much water to give, but be very careful to avoid overwatering. Some plants, like flowers, are harder to maintain. Even everyone's favorite plant friend, the adorable succulent, has a hard time in dorm rooms. It's important to consider your plant experience

and skill. Those with green thumbs should take on the challenge, while those who have a tendency to kill every green thing they touch should stick to cacti and bamboo.

POSITION WISELY

Another helpful piece of advice is to make sure your plant is secure. If you're having friends over, one misplaced elbow could lead to the death of your dearest leafy friend. The space on top of your wardrobe is hard to reach and will keep your plant buddies out of harm's way. If your desk is out of direct sunlight, it is a perfect spot for some of your plant friends to watch you work without getting sunburnt. If not, try placing your plants on top of

your wardrobe or air conditioning unit.

ENJOY THE PROCESS

The most important thing is to take joy in caring for your plants — like any pet — there are responsibilities, but you should be having fun. It is always exciting to name your plants and grow an attachment to them. They may be inanimate objects, but they are still living things. Whether your mission is to become the plant mom of your hall or simply to have one or two study buddies around, knowing your space and your plants is helpful in having happy, healthy greenery in your dorm room.



Lessons from freshman year dorm life

Emily Schroeder

Contributing Writer

Who will I room with? Where will I live? With housing applications just around the corner, these are just some of the many questions that Tech students are starting to ask themselves about housing plans for next year.

Whether that means graduating from dorm life and into an apartment or switching up the roommate scene, big decisions are going to be made.

These decisions can look a little muddled or scary when we don't know what the state of the pandemic is going to look like that far in advance. These feelings of uncertainty are very common and somewhat familiar.

Though for many students, dorms will be out of the question next year for good or for worse, there are still some valuable lessons about living with other people and decision making in times of uncertainty that students can learn from our freshman-year dorm life days to look to for guidance on how to get through it all.

To help out, the ladies of Harrison dorm take readers back to the basics of the essential life skills and advice that they've learned this year.

This serves as a reminder that no matter where or who you end up with (even during a global pandemic), everything will be okay.

IT IS OKAY TO NOT GET YOUR TOP CHOICE

When Clara Bailey, first-year ENVE, suddenly had her housing moved across campus and her international roommate cancel, she did not know what to expect upon arriving on her first day.

However, things ended up working out for the best.

"My current roommate Elizabeth and I were originally set up with different roommates, like I was supposed to live on West with someone else, and then all of a sudden I got a notification that said that Georgia Tech felt it necessary to move me to the other side of campus to East," Bailey said.

Despite being unexpectedly assigned, Bailey and her roommate have gotten along well.

"I had no idea about anything about Elizabeth, totally unexpected," Bailey said. "Now she's like my best friend on

campus."

Lesson to be learned: If you can not get your top choice of housing or do not know who you will be rooming with for next year, do not freak out.

STOP, ACCEPT AND REFLECT

Steph Uveges, first-year ME, has experienced a bit of homesickness living 826.4 miles away from her hometown of Jackson, NJ, but realizing the roots of her feelings has made coping much easier. This new shift in perspective has given her a whole new appreciation to both her life at college and back home.

"Accept it first," Uveges said. "Don't say 'I'm too tough to be homesick' because you're not. That just means that you love people from where you're from. It means you loved your friends when you were home."

Uveges recommends anyone feeling homesick reflect on possible reasons for it.

"You have people here that you love, and if you haven't found those people yet, know that you will," said Uveges. "At first it was rough, but I kept telling myself that it wasn't going to be this bad for that long, and I met some incredible people along the way. But I would say take it in and it's okay to be upset, but don't lose hope."

Lesson to be learned: If you're stressed about housing decisions, taking time to stop and reflect can give you a new perspective that may help your situation.

HONEST COMMUNICATION IS KEY

Madeline Hartlage, first-year CS, emphasizes the importance of talking with your roommate to set some ground rules upfront.

"Figure out the best way to organize your things, sleep schedules, talking on the phone and sharing because these things can often cause conflicts if they become bothersome," Hartlage said. "Additionally, speak up early when something bothers you and be respectful and patient with each other."

Additionally, Hartlage recommends finding a balance between engaging with each other and giving space and privacy. "Open communication is really helpful to establish a good

Maya Torres
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Make your dorm room feel like home

Walking into a closet-sized dorm room on move-in day can be intimidating. The barren walls and unfamiliar furniture are not the most welcoming of sights. But these tiny spaces can become your safe haven during the school year. A plan and the right mindset are all you need to turn your walk-in closet into a home.

Start with the basics. What are you bringing from home? 20 pairs of shoes that you need to figure out how to store? A keepsake that you can't live without? Make a list. Figure out where you're going to store everything you are bringing, so you are not frantically shoving clothes into drawers when you move in.

If you have any decorations already, use them! That cute lamp you saw in Target is nice, but it also costs \$30. Use what you have and do not be afraid to customize your old items to give them a fresh adult look.

Do-it-yourself projects are also a fun way to bring an affordable touch to your dorm. A roll of string and some clothespins, combined with your favorite photos of your friends from home, can fill up an entire wall with cute memories.

Once you have everything you already own mapped out, figure out what you still need to buy. Go into the store with a plan. IKEA and Walmart are smart places to shop if you're trying to save a little money. Start with only things you absolutely need. New sheets and towels? A shower caddy? Put them in your cart. A mug or poster? Maybe hold off for a bit. Remember that you're short on space. Once the hard parts are finished, getting into the actual decorating is the most fun part about planning out your dorm. Figure out which dorm you'll be living in and how it's set up. (Hint: they are all pretty

much the same.)

What height do you want to loft your bed at?

If you are bringing bigger items, such as a microwave, mini-fridge, a futon or extra storage containers, it is crucial to know where they are going. Typically, the space under a lofted bed is a helpful storage place. Knowing which decoration is going on which wall or surface can also be helpful, but that's also something you can figure out once you get there.

Knowing a general theme is extremely helpful. Whether that theme is a generic concept (i.e. space or butterflies), your favorite pop culture piece or just a set of colors you really enjoy, it's nice to have a general idea of what you want to see in your dorm. You don't have to follow this theme strictly; it's just a set of ideas to help you get started.

For decorations, once you know exactly what you want, it's okay to splurge a little. Shopping from small artists on Etsy or in a local art store is a fun way to make your dorm unique.

Some personal favorites are cork boards, tapestries and funky pillow cases that match your comforter. Many rooms have lights - either string lights or colorful LEDs - and this is an awesome way to add some excitement to your dorm, especially for when your eyes get tired of the fluorescent overhead lighting.

If you have a favorite blanket or stuffed animal, don't be afraid to bring them along. It's okay to have a keepsake from your youth, even after you start living on your own. Other fun trinkets, such as books and framed photographs, are great touches for your desk or windowsill.

There's no one way to make your dorm feel like home; every student is different in what comforts or excites them in a living space. A crucial tip is to decorate in a way that will make you happiest, even if that means your room does not look exactly like the one down the hall. It's your dorm, and you are the one who has to live there.

An empty dorm room is a blank canvas, waiting to be filled with your favorite items, both old and new.

