

LIFE BODY & SOUL



Yogamama Says *Kathleen Thompson*

I Love Who I Am (A Kitchen Catalog Fantasy)

The mail order catalogs are coming in hot and heavy now, and I get them all. They are like soap operas that I try to keep up with. I know the particular neighborhoods and players in all of them.

I've watched countless litters of puppies grow into big dogs in L.L.Bean land.

I always root for the girls' team in the snowball fight followed by popcorn-stringing-around-the-fire in Eddie Bauer country.

In the Nordstrom catalog, I look at a woman in a sparkly cocktail dress and wonder where she goes in such a dress? How she lives? I imagine her in front of a dressing table surrounded by perfume bottles with bulb atomizers. I imagine her walking a white standard poodle around Central Park.

At the other end of the spectrum, there is the Athleta catalog. I love those women hoisting kayaks (by themselves) onto the tops of sporty SUVs; hanging by chalked fingers from precipices, their deltoids delineated in spandex bra-tops (that wick), carabiners hanging from belts around their waists.

On different days, in different moods, I want to be all of them. But while I fantasize that I could be any of them, once I put these catalogs down, the fantasy bubble pops, and I am back to myself.

But there is one kind of catalog whose fantasy world

I find a lot harder to shake, and that is the world of the kitchen catalog. Williams-Sonoma, Sur la Table, Chef's Choice—these have a grip on me because I know, without a doubt, that if I just had the right equipment, I could be a really good cook. With the right stuff, I could flambé things. With the right stuff, I might even be able to make a gingerbread chateau.

I know this because I can visualize myself waking up in the morning, putting two oranges into my legendary Omega juicer, and watching it extract the juice, then neatly eject the pulp.

I know I am made for Kitchen Catalog World because

“I love those women hoisting kayaks (by themselves) onto the tops of sporty SUVs; hanging by chalked fingers from precipices, their deltoids delineated in spandex bra-tops (that wick), carabiners hanging from belts around their waists.”

I am completely enamored of high-tech gizmos. I want to be able to select the exact shade of toast from the menu on my digital toaster, the toaster made from the same heavy-duty plastic as football helmets. I am also the kind of woman who might ask herself, “Now, what's a fun and chic way to eat a soft boiled egg?”

In this kitchen catalog fantasy, I reach for my glazed ceramic egg cup and the brass-

handled scissors for snipping off the top. I steam my egg in my glorious tabletop steamer, plate up my toast on a silver toast rack (with crumb tray), and set the whole thing off with an inexpensive (but elegant) cotton napkin with a crocheted edge.

In this kitchen I create and nurture delectable sauces in a vast array of Calphalon pans, while the copper ones look down enviously from their sturdy wrought iron racks.

In this kitchen I slice and dice and chop with a comprehensive set of knives sized for tasks ranging from butchering hogs to pitting olives. Nothing in my Kitchen Catalog World spills or splashes or boils over, and if it does, I have a terrific towel holder at the ready to wipe up the mess.

In this fantasy kitchen, I discover for the first time the high-speed thrills of stir-frying and marvel at the ease with which certain ceramics get me from freezer to oven. Everything I touch here is ergonomically designed, durable, and powerful. In this kitchen entertaining does not give me the heebie-jeebies.

I love who I am in this kitchen. When I step into this high-gloss world, I am extraordinarily competent, organized, and creative. I have time to crush coriander seeds with mortar and pestle, measure cumin into little glass dishes, arrange placecards, and check my lipstick in the gleam of the flatware. In this kitchen I even know what to do with capers.

Oh, but wait! My Eddie Bauer friends are arriving! I can hear them stomping their genuine calf suede boots on my doorstep. I see them brushing the snow from the faux-fur collars of their down-filled parkas.

I really hope the girls' team won the snowball fight this year.

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