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### Dreamy apartment life (or not): A Student's tale of catastrophic cooking

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**Dreamy apartment life (or not)**

**A student's tale of catastrophic cooking**



*By Mandy Halbert*

September 06, 2022

For more information, contact OBU's news bureau at [newsbureau@obu.edu](mailto:newsbureau@obu.edu) or (870) 245-5208.

ARKADELPHIA, Ark. – Warning: Everything you are about to read is completely true. Lovers of cooking should keep scrolling. Gordon Ramsey, please forgive me.

When I was a kid, I used to help my mom cook. Or at least I thought I did. She must have been really good at hiding her help, because I grew up thinking I was a cooking genius. I thought I was the next Wolfgang Puck, but it turns out I'm a fraud.

I lived in the residence halls at Ouachita my freshman and sophomore years. I happily ate all my meals in "the caf," loving every second of the endless fries and ranch dressing. Even though I loved my time in the dorms, I was elated when I found out I had been approved to live in the Starlight apartments.

The summer before my junior year, I excitedly prepared for my new home. I felt like I was living in luxury as I searched Craigslist for my own couch for my new living room. I scoured the internet for deals to make a cozy home. Finally, I carefully crafted a list of cookware.

I planned out the gourmet meals that I would be making. I thought about how relaxing it would be to come home from a long day of classes and get to cook in my little kitchen. I put bookmarks all through my new copy of the *Better Homes & Gardens* cookbook that everyone's mom has in her kitchen. I could not wait to get started. But I was completely unprepared.

I had no idea how much preparation went into cooking; I had to buy my own groceries. I would like to thank my mom for her service all those years. Grocery shopping is no piece of cake.

I would go to the store with no list at all, picking up anything that caught my eye as I wandered through the aisles. I'd push my cart to the self-checkout line (just in case my card got declined) where I'd watch the total rise higher and higher as I tried to hide my growing anxiety. I would then return to my little apartment and realize I had no idea what I would do with anything I had bought.

If I had any common sense at all, I would plan my meals ahead of time. Instead, each week I would go through my random assortment of groceries and attempt to make a meal. I quickly realized that not only do I have no common sense, I have no cooking ability whatsoever.

I burnt pizza to a crisp. I tossed smoking garlic bread out my front door and into the rain. I frantically tried to put out a flaming pan of butter and chicken. I almost choked to death eating pasta when I learned the hard way that melted balls of mozzarella begin to have the consistency of rubber.

My roommate and I grew very familiar with the sound of our fire alarm. Almost daily, it screamed my failures to the entire apartment complex. Heads peeked out from doorways to witness our frantic opening of windows and waving towels in the air to clear the smoke from my latest cooking catastrophe.

My junior year, I lived in denial of my poor cooking skills. I tried again and again, hoping that I could make something edible. A year later, I am still a lousy cook.

I still burn the pizza, and the pasta still boils over. I hope that one day I might become a good cook. But until then, I'll stick to George Foreman Grill quesadillas and slightly overcooked bacon.

*Lead photo by Levi Dade*