




**Kitchen
Wisdom**



Over the years, I've gleaned many little kitchen tricks to make cooking easier. Take some time to sit down and read all these tips before you head back into the kitchen. You might find some of them handy!

T I M E M A N A G E M E N T

CLEAN AS YOU COOK

While your dish is cooking away on the stove or in the oven: wipe down the counters, and wash utensils and other cookware used while preparing your recipe.

DO IT NOW . . . NOT LATER

Wipe up spills as they happen, so you don't end up with a sticky or hard-to-clean mess. If you have a spill that's hardened, leave a damp cloth over it and let sit for 15-30 minutes before wiping.

TAKE NOTES

Have a notepad handy and keep a running grocery list so when you hit the stores, you're not racking your brain for what it was you needed for dinner.

MAKE SURE YOU HAVE WHAT YOU NEED

Read your recipe all the way through and check to see you have all your ingredients BEFORE you start cooking. There is nothing worse than the pained look on your husband's face when you send him off to the store for that one crucial ingredient.

HOSTESS WITH THE MOSTESS

When having friends over for dinner, write out a menu and make a schedule. Prepare in advance as many dishes and ingredients as possible so you don't have to scramble at the last minute trying to get everything all done.

C L E A N I N G

MOTHER THANKS YOU

There are all sorts of eco-friendly cleansers on the market now and Momma Nature thanks you for spending the extra bucks so she can breathe easier. But if you don't have access to them where you live, don't fret. There are easy ways to keep your kitchen and house sparkling clean without hurting your Momma.

ALL-PURPOSE ALL THE TIME

All-purpose cleaner can be easily made by combining 2 tablespoons of baking soda, ½ cup ammonia, ¼ cup vinegar, and 8 cups warm water. And while you're at it – can you also sweep the front walk?



CINDERWELLA CINDERWELLA

It's time to mop. You hate it. I hate it. But it has to be done. ½ cup vinegar and 8 cups of hot water will have us doing the polka on a clean floor in no time.

BURNED YOUR BOTTOM?

If you have a bad burn on the bottom of your pan: fill the pan with 2 inches of water and add 1 tablespoon of baking soda. Bring to a boil, then cover with a lid for 5 minutes. Remove from heat and let stand for 30 minutes before scrubbing. Or . . .

Scrape as much of the burn off as you can, cover with water and add ½ cup of salt. Bring to a boil and continue boiling for 20 minutes. Remove pan from heat and let stand for 30 minutes before scrubbing.

STOP SCOURING AT ME

½ cup baking soda, ½ cup borax, and 1½ cups of hot water will scour away even the most sourpuss of messes.

STOP LOOKING AT YOURSELF

. . . and start cleaning those mirrors. ½ cup of vinegar and 8 cups of water makes your reflection say, ahhh. I'm so pretty. And streak-free.

E M E R G E N C I E S

THE ROOF IS ON FIRE

Baking soda will help to put out an electrical fire, so keep a box near your stove.

BETTER THAN SALT IN YOUR EYE

Toss salt on a grease fire. Never use water.

BETTER SAFE THAN SORRY

Inexpensive fire extinguishers can be purchased at your local hardware store. Pick one specific day every year (like New Year's Day or your birthday) to check or change your fire extinguisher and the batteries in your fire alarm.

YOU STINK

To remove garlic smell from your fingers, rub them with lemon juice and salt, then rinse and wash with soap. Voilà!

FRESH VS. DRIED

If you're in a pinch and don't have the fresh herbs that you need for your recipe: 1 tablespoon of fresh herbs is approximately equivalent to 1 teaspoon of dried.



PASTA TIPS

RINSE . . . LATHER . . . REPEAT

Only rinse pasta after draining when you are going to use it in a cold dish, or when you are not going to be serving it immediately. Rinse under cold water to stop the cooking process and drain well. If you rinse it when you're serving it as a hot dish, the noodles will become slippery and your sauce won't stick.

SALT VS. OIL

Always salt your pasta water before cooking. It will enhance the pasta's flavor and you won't have to salt your dish later when it's served. Adding oil to pasta cooking water is unnecessary as it will make your pasta slippery and your sauce won't stick.

AL DENTE

Pasta is ready when it's "al dente." It should be cooked completely through, yet firm enough to offer some resistance to your bite.

PAS-TUH YIELDS

1 cup or 8 oz of dry pasta = approximately 4 cups of cooked.

RICE TIPS

NO PEEKING

Set your timer; don't lift the lid to check on its progress. If you do, you'll let out steam and slow down the cooking process.

NO STIRRING

Don't stir your rice; just let it be.

RICE YIELDS-ISH

1 cup white rice + 1½ liquid = approximately 3 cups cooked

1 cup brown rice + 2 cups liquid = approximately 3 cups cooked

ARE YOU DONE YET?

Check to see if your rice is done by tasting some; it should be firm, but tender. If it's too firm, then add ¼ cup of water and let it cook until water is absorbed. If the rice is done but there's still water, remove the lid, fluff the rice, and keep cooking until water is absorbed.



T O F U T I P S

I HATE THE TASTE OF TOFU

That's ridiculous. Tofu on its own is bland but has the ability to take on the flavor of whatever ingredients it's cooked with. I think what you're really saying is that you're afraid of trying new things. Get over it.

WHICH ONE GOES WITH WHICH

Tofu comes in various states of firmness: soft, medium, firm, and extra firm, as well as silken (which is very smooth and soft). These different states of firmness are for different kinds of recipes. For example, a soft or silken tofu is perfect for puddings, smoothies or as an egg replacer in baking. A medium tofu is good for recipes where you don't mind if the tofu keeps its shape, like chili or tofu scrambler. Firm or extra-firm tofu is perfect for cubing and using in recipes like a stir-fry or shish-ka-bobs.

DRAINING

Drain your tofu by placing it in a colander over the sink or a plate. Soft or silken tofu generally doesn't need to be drained.

WHAT DO I DO WITH LEFTOVERS?

You can easily store leftover tofu in the refrigerator, but for no longer than a week. Tofu should be stored in a container filled with water. The tofu should be below the surface of the water, and the water should be changed daily. You can freeze it for up to three months, but that will change the texture (see below).

CHANGE THE TEXTURE

If you want your tofu to have a chewier texture, then drain it well, store in an air-tight container (no water), and place in the freezer. Thaw by running under cold water.

V E G E T A B L E T I P S

REMOVE GREENS

If you buy veggies with the greens attached (e.g., carrots, beets), remove the greens when you get home, as they leech moisture.

WASH UP!

Always wash your vegetables with a vegetable soap. It doesn't matter if you bought it sealed in cellophane or if it's organic; you don't know where it's been. So wash it.

ARE YOU LIMP?

If veggies like carrots or celery are limp, try soaking them in ice water for an hour and see what happens.



YOU'RE MAKING ME CRY?

To prevent onions from making you cry, cut them in half and sit them in a bowl of cold water for 15 minutes before using. Then chop to your heart's content – tear-free.

B A K I N G T I P S

OVEN THERMOMETERS

Ovens are notoriously temperamental; for example, my oven is off by about 25°F (4°C). That's a HUGE difference and can make or break your baking! An oven thermometer is a great and inexpensive investment that will make your baking projects easier to deal with.

CLEANER MEASURING CUPS

Before measuring sticky sweeteners like maple syrup or corn syrup, lightly coat the measuring cup or spoon with vegetable oil. The syrup will easily slip out and you won't have as much of a sticky mess to clean up.

ARE YOU DONE YET?

Check your cookies at their minimum baking time. If they're not ready, check again in 5 minutes.

PREHEAT

Unless otherwise stated, always preheat your oven 10-15 minutes before beginning to bake.

OVER THE HILL

Baking powder has an expiry date and if it's old, it can mess up your baking. Check the bottom of your baking powder before buying, and buy in small quantities to make sure it's always fresh. Once opened, baking powder is good for about 6 months. Write the date of opening on the canister so you know when to get a new supply.

WHATEVER BUBBLES . . . BUBBLES UP

If you're not sure if your baking powder is dead, in a small bowl combine 1 teaspoon of baking powder with ½ cup of hot water. If it bubbles vigorously, it's fine to use.

NEVER DIP A WET SPOON

Never dip a wet measuring spoon into your baking powder, because moisture will cause it to deteriorate.

DON'T WAIT TO BAKE

Baking soda and baking powder begin releasing gas the instant they're in contact with liquids, so they should always be added to the dry ingredients before any liquid ingredients are added. Once everything is combined, the batter should be placed in the oven without delay. Have your baking sheets/pans oiled and ready to go and your oven preheated before you start mixing.



YEAST

Yeast comes in packages or by the jar. Make sure it's stored in the refrigerator to avoid spoiling. The only difference between quick-rising yeast and regular dry yeast is that quick-rising will leaven in a $\frac{1}{2}$ of the usual rising time.

IT'S ALIVE!

Check the expiry date on your yeast. If you're not sure if it's still working, combine 1 teaspoon of sugar with 2 teaspoons of yeast and add $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of warm water. If the mixture starts to swell and bubble, it's alive. If there is no activity, toss it out and head to the store. It's done for and time to let it go.

CAKE TIPS

DUSTING SUCKS

For fun, when baking a chocolate cake, instead of using flour to "dust" the pan, try cocoa instead.

SHH! THE CAKE IS SLEEPING

Don't open the oven door during the first 20 minutes of baking time. Always open the oven door gently as sudden movements or temperature change can make the cake fall in the middle.

ARE YOU DONE YET?

Test your cake's readiness by poking the center with a toothpick, wooden skewer, or clean knife. If it comes out clean, the cake is done. If it comes out wet and sticky, let it bake for an additional 5 minutes and check again.

CHILL

Let your cake cool in the pan for 10 minutes before turning it over onto a cooling rack. This will keep it from falling apart during the transfer.

TOTALLY CHILL

Your cake should be completely cooled before you frost it.

YOU'RE ALWAYS IN SUCH A HURRY

To quickly cool a cake before frosting, pop it into the freezer for 10-15 minutes while you make your frosting. Remember that this will change the temperature in the freezer drastically, so make sure you're ready for that.

MAKE ME PRETTY, BUT DON'T MAKE A MESS

It's easiest to ice a cake when it sits directly on its serving plate, so to prevent a mess, place strips of wax paper or parchment paper under the edges of the cake, so that they hang over the edge of the plate. Frost the cake, then quickly pull out the paper, leaving your serving plate nice and clean.

STICKY-ICKY-ICKY

Prevent your freshly baked cake from sticking to your serving platter by dusting the plate with icing sugar.

PIE TIPS

KEEP IT COOL

Keep everything cool while you're making a pie crust and you'll have a much easier time making your dough. Use cool water, keep your margarine cool, and even throw your rolling pin and flour into the refrigerator before you start making your crust.

GET THE RIGHT FLOUR

Pastry flour or all-purpose flour work best when making a crust.

MIDDLE OF THE ROAD

Always move your oven rack to the center of the oven before you preheat and bake your pie.

DON'T GET SOGGY

Don't pour your pie filling into your pie shell until right before you're ready to bake. Otherwise, you'll end up with a soggy crust.

OOPS. I SPILLED

If the juice from a fruit pie overflows while you're baking, sprinkle some salt onto the spill. It will burn to a crisp, making it easier to remove once the oven has cooled.



MISCELLANEOUS COOKING TIPS

TOO SALTY

If your soup is too salty, add some raw cut potatoes to your cooking. Remove them before serving as they will have absorbed a lot of the salt. Or add 1 teaspoon each of apple cider vinegar and sugar to your salty soup and that will remedy the problem.

SAME SIZE PANCAKES

Keep your pancakes all the same size by using a lightly oiled measuring cup. Use $\frac{1}{3}$ cup for medium-sized or $\frac{1}{2}$ cup for bigger pancakes.

DON'T BE AFRAID

Try new things. If it doesn't work, try something else. The more you experiment, the easier cooking gets. Trust me!





45 THINGS TO DO WITH SALT

There is an old English belief that says that “every grain of salt spilled represents future tears.” Wow, like we don’t have enough things to worry about.

1. Rubbing salt in your wound is only an expression. Don’t do it.
2. Enhance the flavor of your food – duh.
3. Use as an abrasive. Toss some salt onto a stubborn kitchen counter stain and scrub with a damp dishcloth.
4. In the winter, de-ice the sidewalk when it freezes by tossing some salt on top of it. Wait 20 minutes and shovel your walk with ease.
5. Sprinkle salt in areas where you have ants and watch them flee.
6. Put a few grains of rice in your salt shaker to keep your salt from sticking together.
7. If you’ve burned your food, scrape as much of the burn off as you can, cover with water, and add ½ cup of salt. Bring to a boil and continue boiling for 20 minutes. Remove pan from heat and let stand for 30 minutes before scrubbing.
8. Add a pinch of salt to fresh-cut flowers to help them last a little longer.
9. To remove the smell of garlic from your fingers, rub them with lemon juice and salt, then rinse and wash with soap.
10. Fresh piercing? Use a simple saline (salt) solution of ½ cup warm water + 1 teaspoon of sea salt to soak your piercing in. It will speed up the healing process.
11. Too many bubbles while you’re doing the dishes? Sprinkle them with a pinch of salt and watch them disappear.
12. Run out of toothpaste? Use equal parts of salt and baking soda (with a drop of peppermint extract if you like) instead. Dip your wet toothbrush in and brush away!
13. If wine is spilled on a tablecloth or rug, blot up as much as possible and immediately cover with a generous amount of salt, then leave until dried. Vacuum up salt and rinse with cold water. The stain will (cross your fingers) be gone.
14. A mixture of lemon juice and salt will remove mildew.



15. Wet a bee sting immediately with water and cover it with salt.
16. If your dish boils over onto the oven floor, sprinkle salt on top to stop smoke and odor. Once oven is cool, wipe spill away.
17. Always salt your pasta water before cooking. It will enhance the pasta's flavor and you won't have to salt your dish when it's served. Adding oil to pasta cooking water is unnecessary as it will make your pasta slippery and your sauce won't stick.
18. Remove stains from old teacups by rubbing with salt and a bit of water.
19. Salt enhances sweetness, so add a pinch when making sweets like kettle corn or hot chocolate.
20. A mixture of lemon juice and salt will remove rust stains.
21. Remove odor from a cutting board by pouring a generous amount of salt directly on the board. Rub lightly with a damp cloth. Wash in warm, soapy water.
22. If the juice from a fruit pie overflows while you're baking, sprinkle some salt onto the spill. It will burn to a crisp, making it easy to remove once the oven has cooled.
23. For a sore throat, gargle with $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of warm water and $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon of salt.
24. Stuffed up nose? Snort a solution of $\frac{1}{4}$ cup warm water and $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon of salt and then blow!
25. Draw the bitterness out of chopped eggplant by salting. Let stand a few minutes and then rinse before cooking.
26. Salt can be used as a skin softener. Throw $\frac{1}{2}$ cup Epsom salt or sea salt into your bath water and you'll be smooth as a baby's bum when you get out.
27. For a crispier skin on your baked potato, slather with olive oil and salt before baking.
28. Make scented bath salts with a mixture of 1 cup Epsom salt, 1 cup baking soda, and 3-4 drops of your favorite essential oil.
29. Sore feet? Soak them in a salt bath: 12 cups warm water, 2 tablespoons of salt, and 2 tablespoons of baking soda.
30. Fill a nail hole with a mixture of 1 tablespoon of salt, 1 tablespoon of corn starch, and 2 teaspoons of water to make a thick paste. Fill hole. Let dry and sand if necessary.



31. Wash dirty green vegetables such as spinach in a sink of mildly salted water to make them easier to clean.
32. When adding flour to a recipe for thickening, stir flour with a pinch of salt to prevent lumps.
33. A greasy pan will wash easier if you rub a little salt on it first. Wipe with a paper towel and then wash pan in hot soapy water.
34. Toss salt on a grease fire. Never use water.
35. Stinky thermos? Add salt and a little hot water. Cap, shake, and rinse. No more smell.
36. Remove blood stains by soaking item in cold salt water, then wash in warm, soapy water and hope CSI doesn't knock on your door.
37. Sooth aching muscles in a hot bath with some Epsom salts.
38. Make your skin glow by rubbing it with equal parts olive oil and salt. (Please do this while standing in your bathtub.)
39. Back in the day, Roman soldiers were paid in salt. So take a satchel of salt down to the store and see if it will buy you groceries.
40. Pour salt into a vase to hold dried or artificial flowers in place.
41. Salting water does not make it boil faster, but it does make it boil hotter, so your cooking time can be reduced.
42. Soak older, wrinkled apples in mildly salted water to revive them.
43. Keep sliced potatoes, apples or pears from browning by placing them in a bowl of mildly salted cold water.
44. Salt can repel fleas, so dunk your dog in the ocean before you head home from your walk or give him a bath in some salt water.
45. If you spill salt, throw a pinch over your shoulder to hit the devil in the eye.