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50 food tips that will change your life!





Being a food blogger calls for creativity, experimentation, resourcefulness, and a heaping dose of passion. So we asked a bunch of these culinary correspondents to share their advice on how to elevate every meal you make.

by Allison Young

photograph by Dan Forbes

1. YOU CAN LEARN A LOT BY READING THE COMMENTS OTHER PEOPLE LEAVE ABOUT ONLINE RECIPES.

I've made super-salty soup one too many times! Reading feedback from others who say "Be sure to reduce the salt" can really save a recipe—and reduce its sodium content! —Julie Fagan*

2. ALWAYS CRACK AN EGG ON A FLAT SURFACE,

never the edge of a bowl. Otherwise you'll risk shell shards and possible contamination of your food. —Aida Mollenkamp

3. DON'T THROW OUT THOSE LAST DRIPS OF JAM IN THE JAR;

shake up a fruity vinaigrette instead. Add equal parts oil and vinegar to the jar, give it a good shake, and season with salt and pepper to taste. —Marisa McClellan

4. COOKING DOESN'T HAVE TO BE ENTIRELY FROM SCRATCH EVERY SINGLE MEAL.

Making easy homemade sauce for store-bought pasta still counts! —Kate Selner

5. SOAK BITTER GREENS,

like arugula or kale, in a bowl of ice water in the fridge for about an hour to cut their bitterness. Run the leaves through your salad spinner several times with a paper towel to get them nice and dry and crisp. —Dina Avila

6. WHEN GRILLING FLANK OR SKIRT STEAK,

marinate it for 10 minutes *after* cooking instead of before. It adds amazing, full flavor in a tenth of the time. —Clay Dunn



When a savory dish needs a little oomph, try a squeeze of lemon instead of salt. A hit of citrus can make the whole recipe come to life. —Erin Scott

8

Add hot sauce to your leftover pizza. It will taste great the next day, plus the chilies have antimicrobial properties that may help leftovers last longer.

—Jada Cash DiCosola

9. EACH TIME I MAKE A BATCH OF COOKIES, I BAKE ONE TEST COOKIE FIRST.

That way, if the oven is a little off that day, I can adjust the baking time accordingly and the rest of the cookies still come out perfectly. —Elana Amsterdam

10. FOR A SATISFYINGLY THICK BUT DAIRY-FREE SOUP, ADD SOME CASHEW CREAM.

It's delicious and easy to make: Soak one cup of raw cashews in water for six to eight hours, drain and rinse them, and blend with $\frac{3}{4}$ cup water until smooth. —Angela Liddon

11. READ THE RECIPE THOROUGHLY, AND THEN WING IT.

Use your senses—taste, touch, smell—pay attention, and play with the ingredients. You might make a few mistakes, but you'll learn so much more. —Sarah Ashley Schiear

12

Never throw away the rind of a piece of cheese. Drop it into a pot of soup—any kind!—for added flavor. Remove it with a spoon and discard before serving.

—Jenny McGruther



13. WHEN MAKING DOUGH, FREEZE THE BUTTER

and grate it into the dry ingredients. You'll handle the cold dough less, resulting in more tender and flaky piecrusts, biscuits, or scones. —Adrianna Adarme

14. WHEN MAKING A WHOLE ROAST CHICKEN, SALT IT, THEN CHILL IT,

uncovered, in the fridge for the day. This helps season the bird and dries out the skin so it crisps perfectly when cooked. Remove it from the fridge an hour before you plan to put it in the oven, and add herbs and aromatics like garlic or shallots. —Amanda Hesser

15. TO CUT AN AVOCADO MORE EASILY,

slice it while it's still in the skin. Not using the whole thing? Leave the pit in the remaining avocado to prevent browning. —Anne Mauney

screen savers

Cooking can be messy, but your devices don't have to be, thanks to these cool tech accessories.



pen pal

Prevent screen smears and smudges with a pretty little pointer. The rubber tip mimics your touch, but gives you even more precise control.

Griffin Stylus, \$20, griffintechology.com



dry dock

Measure ingredients on the scale while your phone rests securely behind a protective cover, and cue up your favorite cooking playlist.

Frieling Joy Digital Kitchen Scale and iPod/iPhone Station, \$50, brookstone.com



a great pyramid

The varying angles—35, 55, and 75 degrees—on this sleek stand allow you to choose the tablet position that's best for you. A magnet holds your device in place.

Facet, \$40, ilovehandles.com

—Kimberly Campbell

16. LEARN HOW TO SHARPEN YOUR KNIVES AND DO IT OFTEN.

The most dangerous thing you can have in your kitchen is a dull knife. You're more likely to cut yourself because you have to press harder. —Elana Amsterdam

17. STORE FRESH HERBS AS YOU WOULD FRESH FLOWERS:

in a jar of water on your countertop. Pluck off what you need, change the water daily, and they'll last two to three times longer than they would in the fridge. You'll get the most extra mileage from flat-leaf parsley. —Jenny McGruther

18. WHEN YOU'RE NOT SURE WHAT TO DO WITH AN EXOTIC VEGGIE, ROAST IT!

Everything from sunchokes to rutabaga tastes great tossed with a little olive oil, seasoned with salt and pepper, and cooked in the oven at 400°F until tender. —Jacquelyn Scoggin

20. REPLACE THE BREAD CRUMBS IN PASTA DISHES WITH FINELY CHOPPED NUTS

for extra flavor and a shot of protein. Try almonds on top of béchamel-based mac 'n' cheese. —Sanura Weathers

21. WHEN SAUTÉING ONIONS, ADD A PINCH OF BAKING SODA.

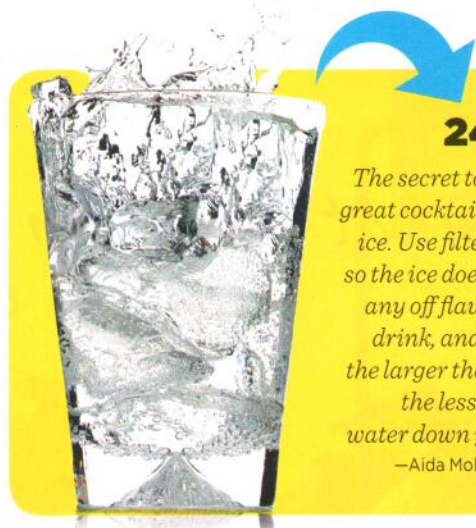
It speeds browning and cuts cooking time practically in half. —Susan Voisin

22. A RUNNY-YOLKED FRIED EGG ADDS INSTANT RICHNESS

to pasta, rice and grain dishes, even pizza. —Cara Eisenpress

23. WHEN ADDING GROUND SPICES TO BREAD OR CAKE BATTER,

cream the spices with the butter and sugar instead of adding them with the other dry ingredients. The fat in the butter helps disperse the flavors of the spices for a much more intense taste. —Joy Wilson

**24**

The secret to making a great cocktail is all in the ice. Use filtered water so the ice doesn't impart any off flavors to the drink, and go big—the larger the ice chunk, the less you'll water down your drink.

—Aida Mollenkamp

25. LIGHT ITALIAN SALAD DRESSING IS A MARVELOUS SHORTCUT

for adding flavor to homemade salsa. Add ¼ cup to three cups of salsa. —Clay Dunn

26. LIKE FOOD, DRINKS CAN BENEFIT FROM QUALITY INGREDIENTS.

Fresh herbs, fruit, smoked salt, and chilies are all wonderful additions to your bar. —Erin Scott

29. SAUTÉ VEGETABLES IN BROTH INSTEAD OF BUTTER OR OIL.

It's healthier, and you'll have crispy, seasoned vegetables without using heated, oxidized oil (which can cause free-radical damage in the body). Pour in just enough broth to cover the bottom of the pan, and cook, lid on, until tender. —Sarah Britton

30. FIGS ARE A GREAT COMPLEMENT TO SAVORY INGREDIENTS:

prosciutto, goat cheese, arugula. A grilled cheese sandwich with cashew butter and fig will change your life! —Ada Cash DiCosola

31. BROWNING MEAT BEFORE COOKING IT WILL GIVE YOU A GOLDEN CRUST

and reduce the cooking time. Use a meat thermometer to tell when the inside is as done as the outside. —Kath Younger

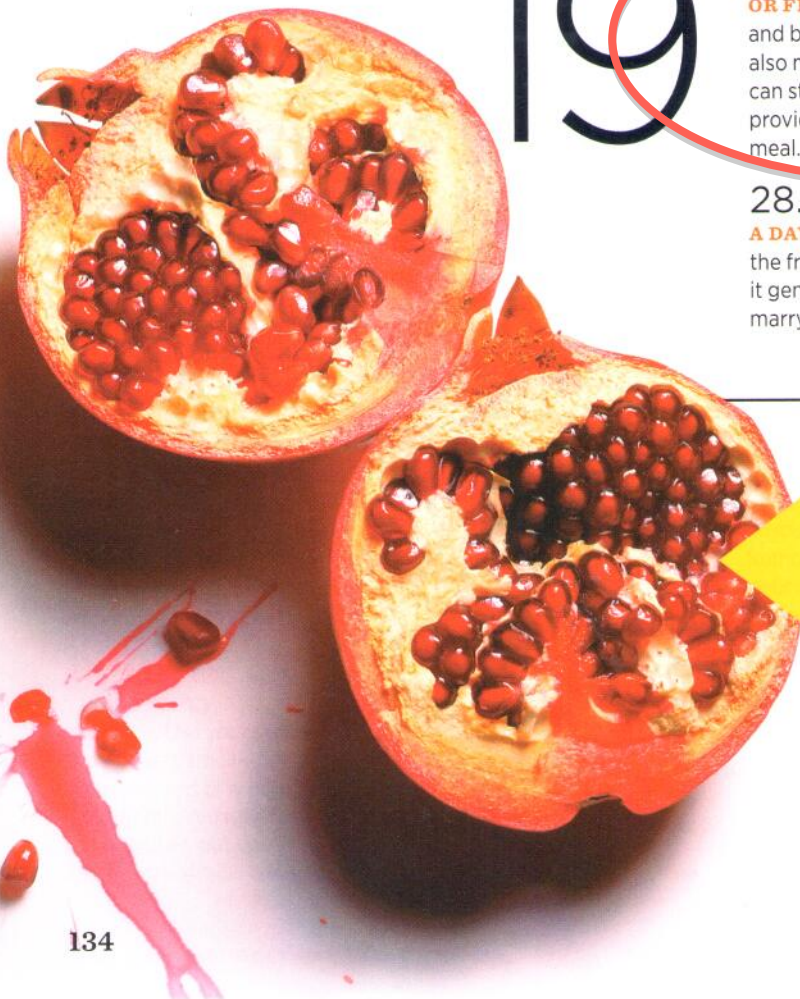
27. WHENEVER POSSIBLE, COOK THE WHOLE CHICKEN OR FISH

to get more juiciness and better flavor. The carcass also makes a fantastic stock and can stretch your dollars by providing the base for a new meal. —Elana Amsterdam

28. A GOOD SOUP IS MADE A DAY IN ADVANCE.

Let it sit in the fridge overnight, then warm it gently and all the flavors will marry beautifully. —Sara Forte

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Avoid messy stains and get at a pomegranate's arils faster by slicing it in half, then submerging it in a bowl of water. The seeds will sink while the pith floats, making them easy to separate.

—Julie Fagan

32. WHEN BAKING WITH GRAIN-FREE FLOURS LIKE COCONUT AND ALMOND, separate the eggs and whip the whites to soft peaks. It makes notoriously heavy flours light and cakelike. —Jenny McGruther

33. REPLACE YOUR SALT SHAKER WITH A SALT CELLAR. It's easier to throw in a pinch or two while cooking, and kosher salt is too big for a shaker. —Emma Christensen

34. FREEZE FRESH GINGER and grate as needed. It will stay fresh for months. —Tara O'Brady

35. ANYTIME I TURN ON MY OVEN, I THINK ABOUT WHAT ELSE I CAN COOK. This saves energy and ensures that I always have healthy options available. —Tina Haupt

36. SPRITZ YOUR CHEESE GRATER WITH NONSTICK SPRAY before using it to make shredding—and cleaning—easier. —Aida Mollenkamp

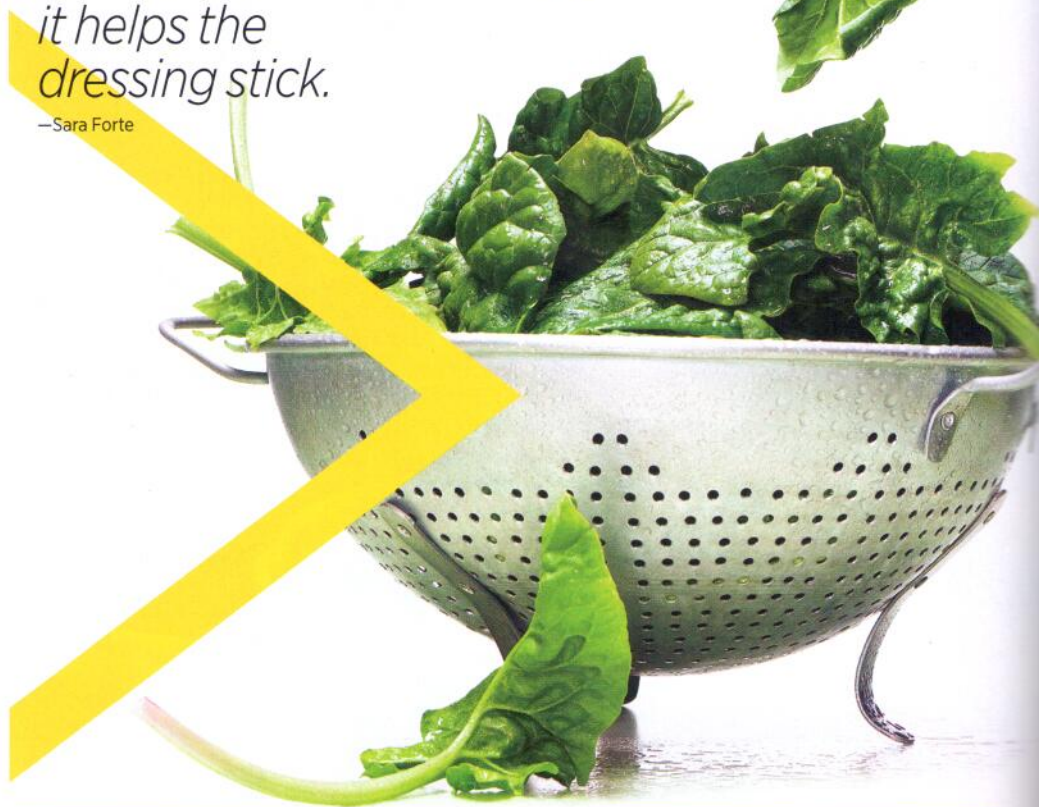
37. RECIPES ARE GUIDELINES; THEY AREN'T CARVED IN STONE. If it's not a main ingredient, you can usually omit it and the dish will still turn out fine. —Kate Selner

38. ADD DRIED FRUIT TO OATMEAL BEFORE YOU ADD THE MILK OR WATER. The fruit will cook and plump up slightly, adding a juicier, more intense taste. —Sanura Weathers

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Want a more flavorful salad? Make sure the lettuce is completely dry—it helps the dressing stick.

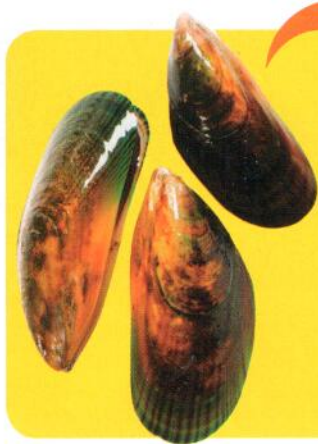
—Sara Forte



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Before cooking mussels or clams, soak them in water with a few tablespoons of flour for 30 minutes. As they open to ingest the flour, they'll expel any sand or grit they contain.

—Adrianna Adarme



41. FOR A CREAMY PASTA SAUCE that doesn't require a ton of butter or cheese, toss a room-temperature beaten egg with the hot pasta and a little of the boiling pasta water and stir like crazy (the heat should kill any bacteria). —Cara Eisenpress

42. MASH BANANAS INSIDE THEIR PEELS USING YOUR HANDS. It's quick and easy, and it doesn't make a big mess. —Tina Haupt

43. YOU CAN MAKE A BIG BATCH OF SANGRIA AHEAD OF TIME, AND IT ONLY GETS BETTER as the flavors meld. One of my most popular was made with sake, vodka, white wine, pineapple, and lychees. —Sarah Ashley Schiear

44. MASSAGE RAW KALE with dressing for a full two minutes to make the greens tender, delicious, and more digestible. —Elana Amsterdam

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45. SERVE YOURSELF

FIRST! To get into the cooking mind-set, I play some Billie Holiday and fix myself a cocktail. —*María del Mar Sacasa*

46. WEAR GLOVES WHEN HANDLING EXTREMELY HOT PEPPERS;

their oils burn like crazy, and soap and water doesn't always do the trick.

—*Susan Voisin*

47. COOK A BIG BATCH OF GRAINS

for a hearty, healthy salad topper that will last all week. —*Anne Mauney*

48. ANNOTATE YOUR RECIPES!

If you change something and it works, write it down. —*Julie Fagan*

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For rich, fudgy brownies without extra fat or calories, bake the batter for about two-thirds of the time the recipe calls for, then freeze with a dish towel under the pan.

—*Cara Eisenpress*



Add about three tablespoons of milk to oatmeal when you reheat it and it will be as creamy as ever.

—*Kath Younger*



blog roll, please

Adrianna Adarme, of A Cozy Kitchen (acozykitchen.com)

Elana Amsterdam, of Elana's Pantry (elanaspantry.com)

Dina Avila, of Leek Soup (leeksoupblog.com)

Sarah Britton, of My New Roots (mynewroots.org)

Emma Christensen, recipe editor for The Kitchn (thekitchn.com)

María del Mar Sacasa, of Cookin' and Shootin' (cookinandshootin.com)

Jada Cash DiCosola, of Better with Butter (betterwithbutter.com)

Clay Dunn, of The Bitten Word (thebittenword.com)

Cara Eisenpress, of Big Girls, Small Kitchen (biggirlsmallkitchen.com)

Julie Fagan, of Peanut Butter Fingers (pbfingers.com)

Sara Forte, of Sprouted Kitchen (sproutedkitchen.com)

Tina Hauptert, of Carrots 'N' Cake (carrotsncake.com)

Amanda Hesser, of Food52 (food52.com)

Angela Liddon, of Oh She Glows (ohsheglows.com)

Anne Mauney, of fANNEtastic Food (fannetasticfood.com)

Marisa McClellan, of Food in Jars (foodinjars.com)

Jenny McGruther, of Nourished Kitchen (nourishedkitchen.com)

Aida Mollenkamp, of Pairs Well with Food (aidamollenkamp.com)

Tara O'Brady, of Seven Spoons (sevenspoons.net)

Sarah Ashley Schiear, of By Sarah Ashley (bysarahashley.com)

Jacquelyn Scoggin, of Good Things Grow (goodthingsgrow.com)

Erin Scott, of Yummy Supper (yummysupper.blogspot.com)

Kate Selner, of Kate in the Kitchen (kateinthekitchen.com)

Susan Voisin, of FatFree Vegan Kitchen (blog.fatfreevegan.com)

Sanura Weathers, of My Life Runs on Food (myliferunsonfood.com)

Joy Wilson, of Joy the Baker (joythebaker.com)

Kath Younger, of Kath Eats Real Food (katheats.com)