

21 Secret Tips

from Professional Chefs





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1. **Cooking with Mushrooms.** Mushrooms will soak up much of the water, as if they were a sponge. You should wet a cloth and wipe the mushrooms off, rather than soaking them.
2. **Complete prep work in advance.** When possible, complete all of the prep work in advance. You'll be glad you have your prep work done when it's time to cook. When you're ready to begin cooking and have set your deadline to finish, you can get really stressed. Get everything prepared at least a day ahead of time.
3. **Keep herbs on your cutting board.** Before chopping fresh herbs sprinkle some salt on the cutting board. This adds flavor to the herbs and helps to keep them from sliding off the cutting board. Then monitor the amount of salt that you add to the food as it is cooking. The salt that you sprinkle on the board sticks to the herbs and gives them just the right amount of flavor.
4. **Use thin strips of meat for stir fry.** Slice meats into thin strips on the bias when prepping for stir-fry. This can be a very time consuming and somewhat difficult procedure. Take the meat out of the freezer when it is slightly frozen and cut at a forty five degree angle, do it across the meat's grain.
5. **Heat oil before it touches food.** To add oil to food already cooking in a skillet, carefully pour it along the sides of the hot pan so that it has a chance to heat through before touching the food. Your finished dishes will be enhanced and more flavorful if you do this.
6. **Catching your own fish saves money.** If you like to eat fish, why not try catching your own? Fishing is a great way to get fresh and cheap meat. Make sure you clean the fish you caught thoroughly before cooking them.
7. **Allow your cooked food to sit a bit before it is served.** This is very important for the juices to be absorbed back into your meat. It is very tempting to serve the meal from grill to tabletop. If you serve immediately off the grill, you will lose most of the juices in meat when you cut into it. Always wait awhile before eating your meal; allow it to cool slightly before digging in.



8. **Use cooking shears (scissors) with fresh herbs.** When cooking with fresh herbs like parsley or dill, bunch them together and cut them with a pair of scissors. They will be light and fluffy, and won't have the wetness that chopping would give them.

9. **Speed roast.** When you want to cook a roast, but you don't have much time, consider cooking a bone-in roast. The idea is that the bone will help carry heat to the center of the roast, thus cooking it faster. When your cooking time is up, you can easily make your cuts, while avoiding the bone, and serve as normal.



10. **Add Tofu to increase protein content of food.** When you want to add a bit of protein to your diet, tofu and beans are a great source of it. It is possible to buy both at most supermarkets. Pan fried tofu, lightly sprinkled with your favorite seasonings, is a delicious substitute to meat. You can boil the beans with a bit of herbs to give the protein more flavor.

11. **Reheat in the oven vs. microwave.** You should always bake instead of microwave when you reheat dishes containing oil so you don't get that greasy mess. Microwaves cook with intense heat that causes the oil to separate because the oil cooks faster. When you bake the meal instead, all the ingredients are reheated at the same time, leaving the dish intact.

12. **Layer a salad when preparing in advance.** It is important to layer a salad well when it is going to be served a few hours after it is prepared. Those with the highest water content should be at the bottom while the top should have those inclined to wilting, such as lettuce or other leafy greens.

13. **Slowing the browning effect of cut fresh fruit.** Most fresh fruits with light flesh will brown when that flesh is exposed to oxygen. While you can use lemon juice or salted water to prevent browning, they don't add appealing flavor. Instead, dip each piece in pineapple juice. A brief submersion will be effective, so soaking the food is not needed.

14. **Adding corn starch and water into your sauce.** There's something you can do to save your effort and your sauce. Put some corn starch into water and mix it in your sauce. Add the mixture into sauce and set to simmer in order to thicken it. Make sure you add the solution slowly while stirring constantly or you risk thickening the sauce too much.

15. **Light coat of vegetable oil on burger patties.** Burger patties often stick to the frying pan or grill during cooking and fall apart when you try to flip them. Try brushing vegetable oil on the cooking surface prior to cooking so that food does not stick.



16. **Try making your own dried tomatoes.** Prepare by cutting ripe tomatoes into half-inch-thick slices or slicing Roma tomatoes in half down their long axis. Take a cooling rack and place the tomatoes on it. Sprinkle them with salt. Use a cookie sheet to hold the rack and set it in the oven at 190F degrees for at least 10 hours. Place the tomatoes into a freezer bag, and freeze them for later use. Dried tomatoes can be placed into a jar that is filled with fresh herbs and olive oil. Dried tomatoes should be stored within the refrigerator and used within two weeks.

17. **Salt pasta during cooking, not after.** When you are making pasta you need to be sure to add a liberal amount of salt to the water. This process will allow the salt to season your pasta while it cooks. Pasta salted during cooking tastes better than pasta salted after the fact.

18. **Expand your spice selection to include Saffron.** One great spice to try is saffron! It brings a vivid blast of flavor which cannot be found in other spices. Saffron is a great ancient spice that is still quite delightful. It is a greatly sought out flavor, making it the priciest spice in the world.

19. **Thick vs thin skin potatoes.** Use a baking potato with thick skin to get a good, firm shell when making potato skins or twice baked potatoes. Red potatoes contain skins that are too thin to hold very much filling.

20. **Slow apples from spoiling.** Apples are used a great deal to cook in the winter and fall months, however it is important to store them properly to prevent spoiling. Warm, dry air can cause apples to rot, so keep your excess stock for cooking and eating in plastic bags, and place them where they will stay cool and moist, such as the basement or refrigerator. Keep checking on them though, otherwise one rotten apple will spoil the bunch in no time at all.



21. **Keeping the nutritional value of vegetables while cooking.** If you are looking for a nutritionally beneficial way to cook your vegetables, try sautéing them in a small amount of chicken broth. Doing so will add a great deal of flavor to your vegetables, and help them maintain their nutritional content. This is a great and delicious way to cook vegetables.

22. **BONUS: Enjoy greens in the winter time.** Winter greens after the initial frost, like broccoli rabe, collards, and kale become sweeter. Look for those that have a full color and avoid those veggies that are limp or yellow. Watch when you wash them, as they carry a ton of dirt. Use a bowl of cold water to wash your greens with. Once washed, shake them off, and then rinse them until you notice the water is running clear.