

# 10 Tips For Making The Most Out Of Any Recipe

Remove the frustration and find joy in each meal you make with these simple tips.



## 1. Recipes aren't rules, they're guidelines

There are many factors that change the outcome of a recipe from kitchen to kitchen and chef to chef. We write our recipes to guide cooks of all skill levels, but just because we recommend one way doesn't mean you can't do it differently. The same goes for ingredients; they often fit our tastes and what is available locally. But if you want to make slight, or even not so slight, variations, do it!

## 2. BUT, recipes call for certain ingredients and techniques for a reason

Don't get too far ahead of yourself! Many recipes use specific ingredients for a reason. Take, for instance, a pizza recipe. If the recipe calls for shredded mozzarella and you use slices of fresh mozzarella, your pizza will turn out far differently than how the recipe intended. Why? Because the two ingredients taste, melt, and function differently. Now this isn't necessarily a bad thing, and we aren't saying not to substitute slices of fresh mozzarella for shredded, but just know it'll be a different pizza.



## 3. Prepare EVERYTHING - workspace, ingredients, and tools

Start with a clean slate. Declutter and wipe down your workspace, get out your pots, pans, and utensils, and prepare your ingredients (this is known as *mise en place*). When you start with a fresh kitchen and have everything you need to make a recipe within arm's reach, cooking becomes that much easier. Say goodbye to the days of burnt veggies and boiled over pots while you were distracted trying to fish your favorite spatula out of the mess you call a utensil drawer.

## 4. Read AND re-read the full recipe before you start

Know what you are doing before you do it. By reading, AND re-reading, no step will catch you off guard. We're not asking you to commit the recipe to memory before you start cooking, although that would make things easy! We're just saying to familiarize yourself with each step so there are no surprises. Too many mistakes can happen if you aren't familiar with a recipe, and all of a sudden you end up with a meat trifle like Rachel Green.



## 5. Take cooking times with a grain of salt

Have you ever wondered what exactly is "medium-high"? Or how big is a "medium" sweet potato? These factors (and others) affect cook time because they vary every time you make a recipe. We've all ended up with something a little too crispy or a little underdone thanks to these variables. So take cooking times with a grain of salt and set your timer for less time than the recipe calls for. This way, you can check to make sure nothing ends up burnt. If it isn't done when the timer goes off, no worries, add a couple more minutes and check again!

## 6. Cook with your senses...

To piggyback on the last point, trust your senses and instincts. If something smells or looks like it's burning, it probably is, and it doesn't matter that your timer hasn't gone off yet – stop cooking it. Use the smells, taste, touches, sights and sounds of your food to guide your cooking. You can hear something frying, you can smell the aromatics of garlic and ginger as they cook, you can see the sear on meat, and you can feel the veggies softening under your spatula as they sauté. And of course, to our next point, taste as you go.



## 7. ...and taste as you go



When possible, tasting as you go will make sure you're happy with the final product. Of course, please don't eat anything you shouldn't, such as raw meat or a scorching hot broth. But, a taste of marinade before putting it on raw meat can give you a good idea of what your finished product will taste like. Or tasting your soup near the end of cooking – does it taste how you want it to? Or does it need something more? This is the perfect time to adjust the flavor of your dish.

## 8. Food doesn't have to look great to taste great

At the end of the day, it really doesn't matter how your food looks as long as it tastes good. Presentation can come later in your cooking journey; for now, just focus on how it tastes. So please, don't worry if your dish doesn't live up to the photos in a blog post! For every pretty picture we share, what you don't see is the dish that didn't get its photo taken, or the time it took to perfectly plate. Plating can be fun, but don't sacrifice taste for it, and don't be discouraged if it doesn't look like ours as long as you enjoy your meal.



## 9. Check 🙌 the 🙌 recipe 🙌 notes 🙌



Here at The Candid Cooks, we take pride in providing you with helpful information in the post, recipe card, and recipe notes. And any good blogger does, too. These tidbits exist to help you learn and ensure your dish turns out how it's supposed to. From advice on ingredient selection to teaching proper techniques, these helpful hints are a must read! If you find a recipe post that doesn't have any helpful information, that's your sign to find a new blogger or a different recipe.

## 10. Don't be afraid to take it slow

3, 2, 1, GO!... Wait, no. You aren't on Guy's Grocery Games. The first time you make a new recipe, don't be afraid to slow it down. We may tell you to overlap steps in the recipe, but you don't have to. Slow down and focus on getting it right: take one step, one ingredient, one portion of the dish at a time, and the final result will be much better for it. Then, next time you make it, it'll come together more quickly and with less chaos.



## 11. BONUS: Have fun. That's the whole point!

Cook for the enjoyment of it! Make a new recipe because it's interesting and you want to give it a try. No matter what, if you enjoy the process and have fun with your cooking, that's all that matters.

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