

## 9 cooking tips from professional chefs that you can follow at home



- Some tips that professional chefs follow can also be useful for at-home cooks.
- Vegetable scraps can be used to make a flavorful vegetable stock.
- Warming your plates in the **oven** before using them to serve meals can help you to create a restaurant-like dining experience.

Throughout their careers, most chefs learn quite a few cooking tips and tricks that can make preparing tasty dishes easier and more efficient. And even the most dedicated and well-practiced home cooks can learn a few things from the pros.

INSIDER asked a group of professional chefs for the most useful cooking techniques and shortcuts they've discovered at work. Here are some of their best tips that you can follow in your own kitchen.

**Keep an eye on the [shelf-life of your spices](#) and use fresh versions whenever possible**

Keeping an assortment of dried herbs in your pantry can be useful, but it's important to know when to replace your spices. Although spices don't technically spoil, [they can lose potency](#). Some signs your spices are no longer as strong as they should be is if their color has faded or their aroma is very faint, according to McCormick.

Chef Kelly Fields of [Willa Jean](#) in New Orleans, Louisiana said one of the most basic cooking tips you can follow is to keep your spices fresh and well-sourced. "It really creates a powerhouse of flavor when you put in the extra effort to intentionally source the best available," she added.

**For a nicely cooked protein, sear it on the stove and finish it in the oven**

If you're trying to achieve a nice sear while evenly cooking your meat, you might want to utilize your stove-top and oven.

"Finish your protein in the oven after starting on the [stovetop](#). [That way,] you can get a nice sear on your meat or poultry and then cook [it] to just the right temperature in the oven," Candace Conley, the Oklahoma-based professional chef behind [The Girl Can Cook!](#) said.

**The key to making a juicy steak is starting with room temperature meat and letting the meat rest after you cook it**



Chef Ashley Eddie of [Santina](#) in New York City said she advises bringing your steaks to room temperature before you put them on a hot pan or grill. She said that doing so allows the fat in the meat to relax, which can help you to achieve a nice, even sear.

Once you remove your steak from the heat, be sure to give it time to rest before you slice it. "That means cooking it to right under your desired temperature, then letting it cool at room temperature to allow all the juices to settle," Seamus Rozycki, executive chef of [Geist](#) in Nashville, Tennessee told INSIDER.

"I would recommend letting the steak sit for at least five minutes and up to 10 to 15 minutes, max. At that point, it should be nice and evenly cooked without spilling all the delicious juices out when you slice it," he added.

## **Prepare your ingredients in advance and organize your pantry to streamline the cooking process**

Because many professional chefs must juggle numerous orders at once, keeping their kitchens organized is essential. One of the key tricks to doing this is "mise en place," a French term that literally translates to "everything in its place." Many chefs use this phrase to describe their method of organizing ingredients and equipment before they start cooking.

According to Jacob Verstegen, executive chef of [LH Rooftop](#) in Chicago, Illinois, a mise en place can help you to stay organized.

"When cooking something, prepare all your ingredients before you actually start cooking them. When it's all laid out in front of you, it becomes a lot more enjoyable to actually cook, instead of rushing around your kitchen and pulling together the ingredients while trying not to burn the first step of the process," he told INSIDER.

Jose Guerrero, the executive chef of [ViewHouse](#) in Denver, Colorado, said he also suggests you organize your pantry because it can help you to save time when you're preparing your ingredients.

"Not only does an organized and fully-stocked pantry make life easier, but it leads to more streamlined cooking," he told INSIDER. "I like to build my pantry based off of categories including spices and pastas or grains. Then, I alphabetize each component from ground turmeric to nutmeg - I know exactly where each ingredient lives."

## **For perfectly-buttered toast, melt your butter and apply it with a brush**

Most of us know how frustrating it can be when you go to spread fresh-out-of-the-fridge butter on toasted bread and you end up with a messy, unevenly buttered slice. Chef Jessica Koslow of [Sqirl](#) in Los Angeles, California said you can avoid this by melting butter and then using a brush to evenly distribute it onto both sides of your toast.

## Warm your plates before serving food on them to achieve a restaurant-level dining experience

"Keep your plates warm in the oven before serving to keep the food warm," Chef Judy Joo of [Jinjoo](#) in London, England told INSIDER. According to Eatwell 101, you'll want to warm a stack of plates at a low temperature for [no longer than 15 minutes](#). Be sure to use oven mitts when removing the plates from the oven and to check that the plates you're using [are oven-safe](#).

**To serve everything in a timely manner, plan out when to make your dishes before you start cooking**



"One of my favorite egg dishes we are doing at The Keep is an egg white frittata with caramelized onions, potatoes, roasted peppers,

spinach, and Gruyère cheese," chef Jonathan Olson of [The Keep](#) in Columbus, Ohio told INSIDER.

Figuring out the most efficient order to cook your dishes in can help you make multiple things at a time while still being able to serve them all at once.

"Time out your dishes. This is important at [a] restaurant and can be at home as well, especially [if your] kitchen only has one oven and one stovetop," Chef Andy Little of [Josephine](#) in Nashville, Tennessee told INSIDER.

This tip is especially handy if you're serving a meal with multiple components to a large group of people. Little also said that some side dishes can become even more flavorful over time, so you might want to cook those first. "A lot of my favorite sides, like greens and chili, get better the longer they sit because that lets those flavors marinate together," he added.

### **Save your vegetable scraps and use them to make stock**

Amateur chefs frequently toss their unused veggie scraps in the trash or the compost pile, but most pros know that these discarded bits can actually be worth keeping. Executive chef Kevin Templeton of [barleymash](#) and [The Smoking Gun](#) in San Diego, California told INSIDER that vegetable scraps can be perfect for making a stock.

"Onion ends, carrot butts, celery ends and leaves, and parsley stems all make for a great stock," he said. "I also love to use the base of cauliflower and broccoli. Just stay away from seeds and some herbs when making a stock, as they can make it bitter."

To make stock, he said you need to add enough water to your veggie scraps in order to completely cover them, simmer the mixture for 45 minutes, and then strain it. Templeton said that the finished stock can be great to use when making soups and sauces.

### **Halfway through their time in the oven, rotate your baked goods to ensure they are cooked evenly**

"Rotate whatever you're baking halfway through the process, even if you're working with a convection oven," Jessica Craig, executive pastry chef of L'Artusi in New York City, told INSIDER. She said doing so can help your baked goods to cook evenly.