

7 Cooking ‘Rules’ Pro Chefs Are Begging You To Break



Emily Laurence · June 10, 2021



Photo: Getty Images/Lumina Images

If you’re someone who follows a recipe to a T, there’s a good chance you aren’t exactly a rule breaker. It makes sense—especially if you don’t quite feel like Ina Garten in the kitchen. Veer from a recipe and you risk ruining your entire dish. But as a [recent viral Reddit thread](#) is proving, there are times when cooking foods “wrong” ends up being so, so right.

In the thread, the Reddit community shares foods they prepare incorrectly on purpose, whether it’s because they alone think it makes the dish taste better or they swear that *everyone* thinks the results are exceedingly more delicious that way. Inspired, I decided to reach out to reputable chefs to find out when they think it’s best to break the rules in the kitchen. They certainly didn’t hold back. From deliberately burning broccoli to using three times the amount of garlic a recipe calls for, these chefs aren’t afraid to get creative in the kitchen. Breaking the rules never tasted so good.

7 cooking rules to break, recommended by chefs

1. Soaking rice way longer than you’re “supposed” to

While many people use a rice cooker to make rice, [The Mediterranean Dish](#) creator [Suzy Karadsheh](#) says she always makes hers on the stove. But she her rice prep involves one more step that’s typically frowned upon: she lets the grains soak for at least 20 minutes before cooking them. “Many people think it’s wrong to soak your rice this long and that it may make the rice mushy. However, the opposite is actually true,” she says. “When the grains are soaked and drained, you shorten the cooking time. This helps ensure that the interior of the grain actually cooks before the exterior loses its shape. Your rice will cook well and become nice and fluffy when you use less cooking water, too.” She promises this is the secret to nailing the ideal, light and dense-free texture.

2. Making Southern greens without meat

As a soul food chef with Southern roots, [Rene Johnson](#) says many people have highly specific rules about how the cuisine she makes ‘should’ be crafted. Greens in particular, she says, can really rile folks up. “It always surprises my guests when they take their first bite of my vegan greens. As they’re biting in, they’re telling me how their mom or grandmother used to make greens, and about how much they miss it. They’ll share with me that if greens do not have a pork shank or a smoked turkey wing in them it just won’t be done right,” she says. “Then they taste my vegan greens, which they would have sworn was done ‘wrong,’ and they have to eat their words. It always cracks me up!” Her secret to winning everyone over? A combination of fresh leeks, fresh fennel, and chili powder.

3. Underbaking cookies and cakes

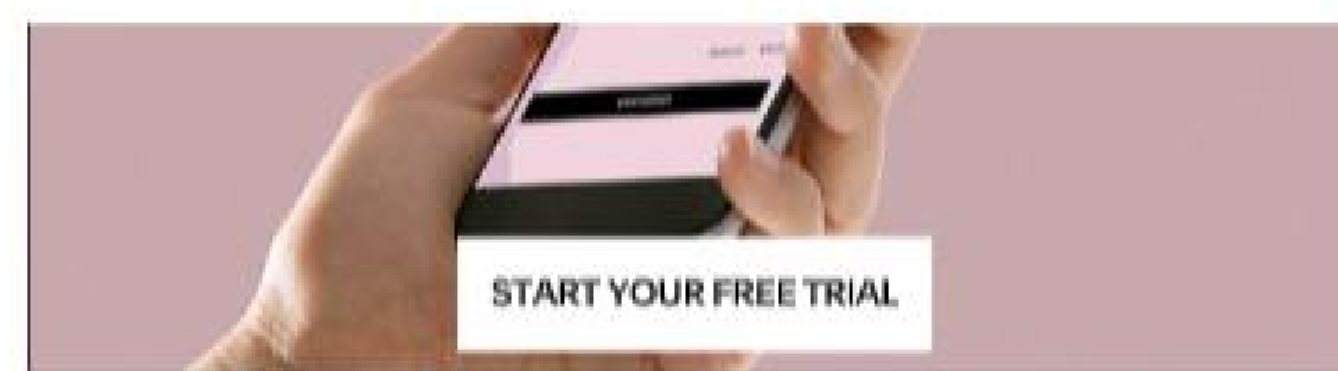
You know how every recipe tells you exactly how long to leave something in the oven? Yeah, Food Network star and Institute of Culinary Education chef [Palak Patel](#) isn’t really into that. “I almost always underbake my cookies and cakes,” she says. Instead, she shaves a few minutes off the baking time—this, she promises, is the trick to giving baked treats that just-right gooey texture. “Underbaking also prevents cakes and cookies from drying out,” she says. However, she points out that there’s a fine line between underbaking and raw (you want to avoid the latter). If you stick a fork in and it comes out *almost* clean of the batter, you know you mastered it.

4. Going “too heavy” on the seasoning

Chef, cookbook author, and nutritionist [Ariane Resnick, CNC](#), is also a recipe rule breaker. Whatever amount of herbs or seasonings a recipe calls for, she says she uses more—a *lot* more. “When working with simple, whole-food ingredients, I find that more herbs and spices help better mimic the taste of ‘commercial’ food that many people love,” she says. Resnick says she’s also heavy-handed when it comes to vinegar, wine, mustard, and other flavorful, acidic condiments. “It makes the difference between food that reads as ‘healthy’ and food that tastes restaurant-quality, which is what both private chef clients and the home cooks who find recipes online are seeking,” she says.

5. Cooking with “too much” garlic

Rainbow Plant Life creator [Nisha Vora](#) says she also likes to cook with more herbs than is considered ‘standard.’ In fact, there is one in particular she is especially liberal with. “I use way more [garlic](#) than most people. If I see a recipe that has one clove of garlic, I immediately don’t trust it,” she says. “I usually double—sometimes, triple!—the amount of garlic in recipes. Eight cloves of garlic in a soup? Seems right to me. It’s an easy and cheap way to infuse a flavorful backbone into all kinds of savory recipes.”



Watch the video below to see why consuming garlic is so good for you:



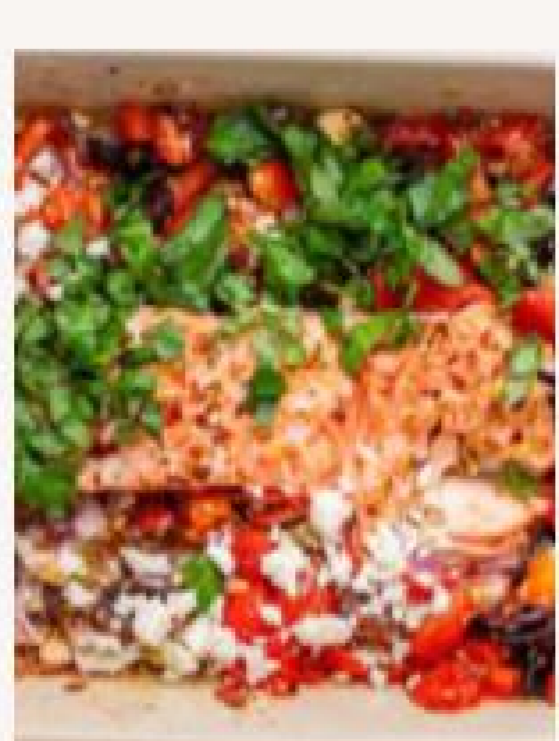
6. Undercooking oats

Similarly to how Chef Palak cuts a few minutes off the cook time for baked goods, cookbook author and restaurateur [Dan Churchill](#) says he does the same thing with oats. “[I undercook] author and restaurateur [Dan Churchill](#) says he does the same thing with oats. “[I undercook] oats to the point where they become almost like a batter, as opposed to a thin oatmeal,” he says. This, he says, gives it a nuttier and chewier taste as well as a stronger flavor profile. So if you think oatmeal is bland, this cooking trick will likely change your mind.

7. Burning broccoli

Burning food tends to be the biggest cooking ‘no,’ but Post Punk Kitchen creator and cookbook author [Isa Chandra Moskowitz](#) says she purposely overcooks and burns her broccoli. “It’s my favorite comfort food,” she says. “I toss it with [olive oil](#) and sea salt and bake it in a super hot oven—like 450°F—and let the edges turn [brown](#) and crispy and even sometimes black. The inside gets tender and luscious. It’s a whole thing.” Um, suddenly burnt broccoli actually sounds...amazing.

RELATED STORIES



6 Extra-Special 'Dinner for One' Recipes Totally Packed With Protein



This One-Pot Pasta Recipe Is Perfect When You Just Can't Deal With...

As these chefs show, there are times when breaking the rules definitely pays off. And sometimes, you end up with something really, *really* delicious. (If not, at least you got the adrenaline rush.)

Join [Well+Good's Cook With Us Facebook group](#) for more ways to get creative in the kitchen.

EXPERTS REFERENCED

Ariane Resnick, CNC
Chef and certified nutritionist

Dan Churchill
Chef

Isa Chandra Moskowitz
Vegan Chef, Cookbook Author, Restaurateur, and Post Punk Kitchen creator

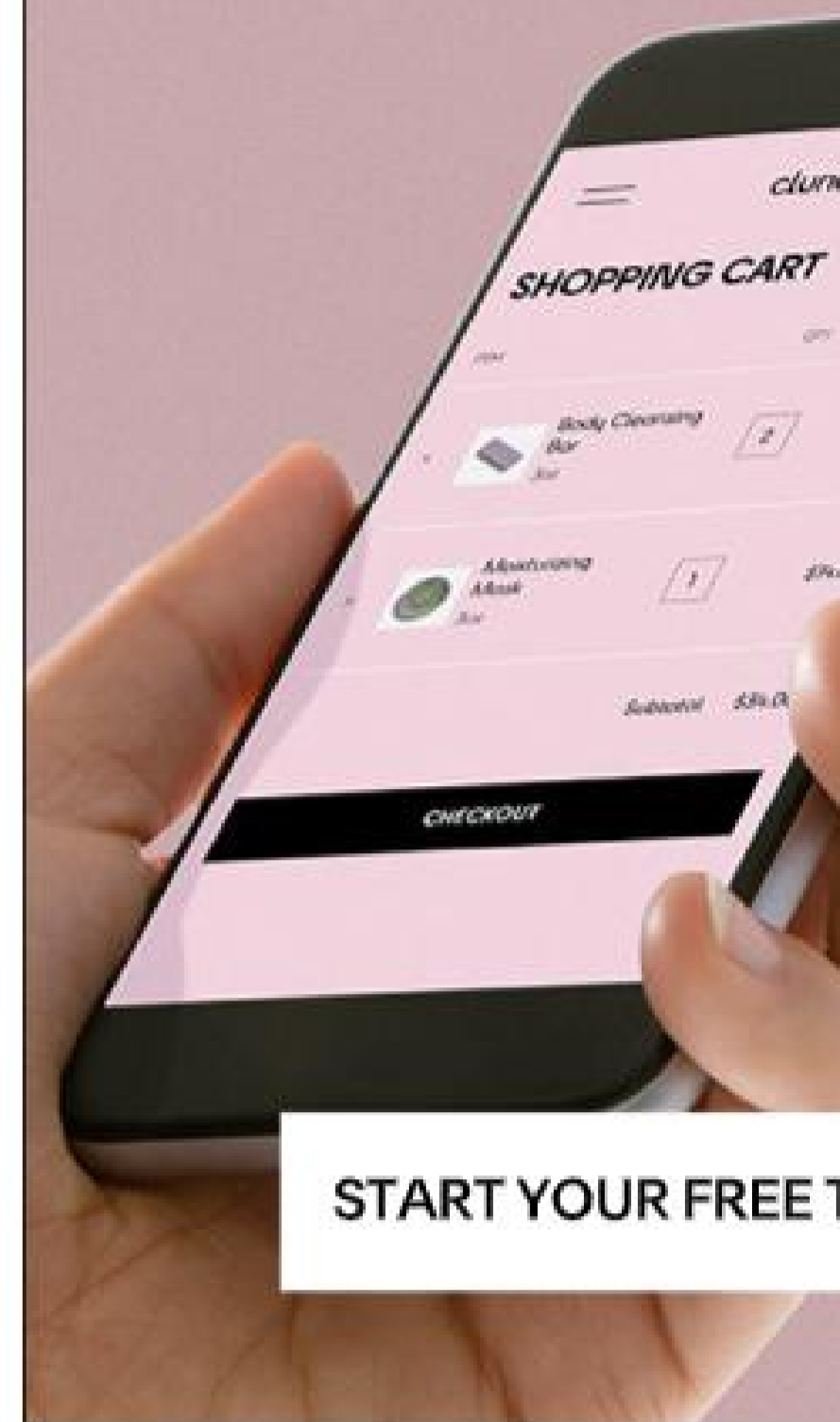
Palak Patel
Chef

Rene Johnson
Chef, Blackberry Soul

Suzy Karadsheh
Creator, The Mediterranean Dish

SQUARESPACE

Never lose a customer with fast checkout and payment processing.



START YOUR FREE TRIAL