



INTRODUCTION

Anyone can cook anything and make it delicious.

Whether you've never picked up knife or you're an accomplished chef, there are only four basic factor that determine how good your food will taste: salt, which enhances flavor; fat, which amplifies flavor and makes appealing textures possible; acid, which brightens and balances; and heat, which ultimately determines the texture of food. Salt, Fat, Acid, and Heat are the four cardinal directions of cooking, and this book shows how to use them to find your way in any kitchen.

Have you ever felt lost without a recipe, or envious that some cooks can conjure a meal out of thin air (or an empty refrigerator)? Salt, Fat, Acid, and Heat will guide you as you choose which ingredients to use, how to cook them, and why las-minute adjustments will ensure that food tastes exactly as it should. These four elements are what allow all great cooks - whether aware-winning chefs or Moroccan grandmothers or masters of molecular gastronomy-t cook consistently delicious food. Commit to master them and you will too.

As you discover the secrets of Salt, Fat, Acid, and Heat, you'll find yourself improvising more and more in the kitchen. Liberated from recipes and precise shopping lists, you'll feel comfortable buying what looks best at the farmer's market or butcher's counter, confident in your ability to transform it into a balanced meal. You'll be better equipped to trust your own palate, to make substitutions in recipes, and cook with what's on hand. This book will change the way you think about cooking and eating, and help you find your bearings in any kitchen, with any ingredients, while cooking any meal. You'll start using recipes, including the ones in this book, like professional cooks do-for the inspiration, context and general guidance they offer, rather than following them to the letter.

I promise this can happen. You can become not only a good cook, but a great one. I know, because it happened to me.

-Samin Nosrat

Wasatch County Cooking Class, October 2025

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Buttermilk-Marinated Roast Chicken

Samin Nosrat

INGREDIENTS

- 3 ½ -to 4-pound chicken
- salt
- 2 cups buttermilk

DIRECTIONS

The day before you want to cook the chicken, remove the wingtips by cutting through the first wing joint with poultry shears or a sharp knife. Reserve for stock. Season it generously with salt and let it sit for 30 minutes.

Stir 2 Tablespoons of kosher salt or 4 teaspoons fine sea salt into the buttermilk to dissolve. Place the chicken in a gallon-size resealable plastic bag and pour in the buttermilk. If the chicken won't fit in a gallon-size bag, double up two plastic produce bags to prevent leakage and tie the bag with a piece of twine.

Seal it, squish the buttermilk all around the chicken, place on a rimmed plate, and refrigerate. If you're so inclined, over the next 24 hours you can turn the bag so every part of the chicken get marinated, but that's not essential.

Pull the chicken from the fridge an hour before you plan to cook it. Preheat the oven to 425 degrees F, with a rack set in the center position.

Remove the chicken from the plastic bag and scrape off as much buttermilk as you can without being obsessive. Tightly tie together the legs of the chicken with a piece of butcher's twine. Place the chicken in a 10-inch cast iron skillet or shallow roasting pan.

Slice the pan all the way to the back of the oven on the center rack. Rotate the pan so that the legs are pointing toward the rear left corner and the breast is pointing toward the center of the oven (the back corners tend to be the hottest spots in the oven so this orientation protects the breast from overcooking before the legs are done). Pretty quickly you should hear the chicken sizzling. After about 20 minutes, when the chicken starts to brown, reduce the heat to 400 degrees F and continue roasting for 10 minutes and then move the pan so the legs are facing the back right corner of the oven.

Continue cooking for another 30 minutes or so, until the chicken is brown all over and the juices run clear when you insert a knife down to the bone between the leg and the thigh.

When the chicken's done, remove it to a platter and let it rest for 10 minutes before carving and serving.

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Persian-ish Rice

Samin Nosrat

INGREDIENTS

- 2 cups basmati rice
- Salt
- 3 Tablespoons plain yogurt
- 3 Tablespoons butter
- 3 tablespoons neutral-tasting oil

DIRECTIONS

Fill a large stockpot with 4 quarts of water and bring it to a boil over high heat. In the meantime, place the rice in a bowl and rinse with cold water, swirling vigorously with your fingers and changing the water at least five times, until the starch has run off and the water runs clear. Drain the rice.

Once the water comes to a boil, salt it heavily. The precise amount will vary depending on what kind of salt you're using, but it's about 6 tablespoons fine sea salt or a generous $\frac{1}{2}$ cup kosher salt. The water should taste saltier than the saltiest seawater you've ever tasted. This is your big chance to get the rice seasoned from within, and it's only going to spend a few minutes in the salted water, so don't panic about over salting your food. Add the rice, and stir.

Set a fin-mesh sieve or colander in the sink. Cook rice, stirring from time to time, until it's al dente, about 6 to 8 minutes. Drain into the sieve and immediately begin rinsing with cold water to stop the rice from cooking further. Drain.

Remove 1 cup of the rice and combine it with the yogurt.

Set a large, very well seasoned 10-inch cast iron skillet or nonstick frying pan over medium heat, then add the oil and butter. When the butter melts, add the yogurt-rice mixture into the pan and level it out. Pile the remaining rice into the pan, mounding it gently toward the center. Using the handle of a wooden spoon, gently dig five or six holes into the rice down to the bottom of the pot, which will be gently sizzling. The holes will allow steam to escape from the bottommost layer of rice so that a crisp crust can form. There should be enough oil in the pan so that you can see it bubbling up the sides. Add a little more oil if needed to see these bubbles.

Continue cooking the rice over medium heat, turning the pan a quarter turn every 3 or 4 minutes to ensure even browning, until you start to see a golden crust begin to form at the sides of the pan, about 15 to 20 minutes. Once you see the crust turn from pale amber to gold, reduce the heat to low and continue cooking for another 15 to 20 minutes. The edges of the crust should be golden, and the rice should be cooked completely through. There isn't a way to tell what tahdig will look like until you flip it, so I prefer to err on the side of overbrowning, but if that makes you uncomfortable, pull the rice after about 35 total minutes in the pan.

To unmole the rice, carefully run a spatula along the edges of the pan to ensure that no part of the crust is sticking. Tip out any excess fat at the bottom of the pan into a bowl, gather your courage, and then carefully flip it onto a platter or cutting board. It should look like a beautiful cake of fluffy rice with a bolden crust.

And if for any reason your rice doesn't slip out in one piece, do what every Persian grandmother since the beginning of time has done, scoop out the rice, chip out the tahdig in pieces with a spoon or metal spatula, and pretend you meant to do it this way. No one will be the wiser.

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Bright Cabbage Slaw

Samin Nosrat

INGREDIENTS

- ½ head of red or green cabbage (about 1 ½ pounds)
- ½ small red onion
- ¼ cup lemon juice
- Salt
- ½ cup coarsely chopped parsley leaves
- 3 Tablespoons red wine vinegar
- 6 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

DIRECTIONS

Quarter the cabbage through the core. Use a sharp knife to cut the core out at an angle. Thinly slice the cabbage crosswise and place in a colander set inside a large salad bowl. Season with two generous pinches of salt to help draw out water, toss the slices, and set aside.

In a small bowl, toss the sliced onion with the lemon juice and let it sit for 20 minutes to macerate. Set aside.

After 20 minutes, drain any water the cabbage may have given off (it's fine if there's nothing to drain-sometimes cabbage isn't very watery). Place the cabbage in the bowl and add the parsley and the macerated onions (but not their lemony juices, yet). Dress the slaw with the vinegar and olive oil. Toss very well to combine.

Taste and adjust, adding the remaining macerating lemon juice and salt and needed. When your palate zings with pleasure, it's ready. Serve chilled or at room temperature.

Stor leftover slaw covered, in the fridge, for up to two days.

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Lori's Chocolate Midnight Cake

Samin Nosrat

INGREDIENTS

- ½ cup (2 ounces) Dutch-process cocoa powder, preferably Valhona
- 1 ½ cups (10 ½ ounces) sugar
- 2 teaspoons kosher salt or 1 teaspoon fine sea salt
- 1 ¾ cups (9 ¾ ounces) all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- ½ cup neutral-tasting oil
- 1 ½ cups boiling water or freshly brewed strong coffee
- 2 large eggs at room temperature, lightly whisked
- 2 cups Vanilla Cream

DIRECTIONS

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F. Set a rack in the upper third of the oven.

Grease two 8-inch cake pans, then line with parchment paper. Grease and sprinkle generously with flour, tap out the excess and set aside.

In a medium bowl, whisk together the cocoa, sugar, salt, flour, and baking soda, then sift into a large bowl.

In a medium bowl, stir the vanilla and oil together. Bring the water to a boil or brew the coffee. Add it to the oil-vanilla mixture.

Make a well in the center of the dry ingredients and gradually whisk in the water-oil mixture until incorporated. Gradually whisk in the eggs and stir until smooth. the batter will be thin.

Divide the batter evenly between the prepared pans. Drop the pan onto the counter from a height of 3 inches a couple of times to release any air bubbles that may have formed

Bake in the upper third of the oven for 25 to 30 minutes, until the cakes spring back from the touch and just pull away from the edges of the pan. An inserted toothpick should come out clean.

Cool the cakes completely on a wire rack before unmolding them from the pan and peeling off the parchment paper. To serve, place one layer down on a cake plate. Spread 1 cup vanilla cream in the center of the cake and gently place the second layer atop it. spread the remaining cream onto the center of the top layer and chill for up to 2 hours before serving.

Alternatively, top with cream cheese frosting, serve with ice cream or simply dust cake with cocoa powder or powdered sugar. The batter also makes for fantastic cupcakes!

Tightly wrapped, this cake will keep for 4 days at room temperature, or for 2 months in the freezer.

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Vanilla Cream

Samin Nosrat

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup heavy cream, chilled
- 1 ½ teaspoons granulated sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract

DIRECTIONS

Chill a large, deep metal bowl (or the bowl of your standing mixer) and the whisk (or whisk attachment) in the freezer for at least 20 minutes before you begin. When the bowl is chilled, prepare the cream with the vanilla, then add the sugar.

I prefer to whip cream by hand because it gives more control, so I'm less likely to overwhip it and end up with butter. If you'd like to use a mixer, run it at a low speed. Whisk until the first soft peaks appear. If using a machine, switch to a hand held whisk and continue to whisk until all of the liquid cream has been incorporated and the texture of the cream is uniformly soft and billowy. Taste and adjust sweetness and flavoring as desired. Keep chilled until serving.

Cover and refrigerate leftovers for up to 2 days. Use a whisk to bring deflated cream back to soft peaks as needed.

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