

40+ food tips that will change your life!





Cooking calls for creativity, experimentation, resourcefulness, and a heaping dose of passion. So we asked a bunch of culinary experts (and the *Women's Health Middle East* and *Men's Health Middle East* teams!) to share their advice on how to elevate every meal you make.

AVOID PUTTING SAFFRON THREADS STRAIGHT INTO FOOD: IT'S LIKE PUTTING A WHOLE VANILLA BEAN IN YOUR CUSTARD. Gently grind the strands in a pestle and mortar, add a tiny bit of hot water and voila, you have "saffron water"! —*Ariana Bundy, TV Chef and Cookbook Author of "Pomegranates and Roses: My Persian Family Recipes"*

FOR YOUR CARROTS TO BE COLOURFUL AND CRISPY, store them in a covered container filled with water. For your lettuce, place ice in a bowl and put the lettuce on top covered with water, then let it soak for 15 minutes. —*Krishna Basker, Chef at Organic Foods and Café*

COOK PASTA FOR 3 MINUTES LESS THAN WHAT'S WRITTEN ON THE PACKAGE INSTRUCTIONS, and cook it the rest of the time in the pan with your sauce. Acidity, salt and citrus bring out the full flavours of food. —*Fabio Nompleggio, Executive Chef, Frankie's Italian Bar & Grill*

MAKE A SIMPLE COMPOTE WITH FRUITS THAT RIPEN TOO QUICKLY FOR YOU TO EAT. Clean and boil the fruits with a splash of water on low heat for about 45 minutes. Once the fruit has broken down to a pulp, allow to cool and store in a clean jar in the fridge for up to a month. This is delicious served with your breakfast yoghurt, in smoothies, or on top of some ice-cream! —*Paul Frangie, Chef & TV Personality (and our Guy Next Door!)*



The trends have definitely changed in how best to marinate meat. Milk is a great option over lemon juice or vinegar—which can be very drying—and my top meat marination tip is to use Rosemary Oil. Rosemary not only tastes amazing, but it's also long been regarded as medicinal. High in antioxidants, its health benefits include aiding digestion, improving hair and skin and boosting brain power.

—Bhatt Dwarika, Head Chef at Zero Gravity



Drop fresh herbs and a garlic clove or two into your olive oil—it will infuse into beautiful flavours. Once it’s strong enough, simply remove them from the bottle. Also, when your berries have seen better days, place them in a small pot, add some fresh lemon juice, a spoon of honey and cook them down into a puree. Cool and spread it over bread, or drizzle it over dishes for extra oomph.

—Dalia Dogmoch Soubra, Co-Founder of Kitsch Cupcakes and Cookbook Author of “Food, Love and Life from Dalia’s Kitchen”

HPP or (hydrolysed plant protein) HVP or (Hydrolysed Vegetable Protein), Maltodextrin (made from corn, usually GMO) and Modified Food Starch. Steer clear of these and try to eat foods that don’t need so many ingredients—whole food nutrition will always be the best route to take! —Christopher Zerbe, Chef at The Cycle Bistro

DRINK FRESH LEMON JUICE WITH WARM WATER EVERY MORNING AFTER YOU GET OUT OF BED

— it’s great for flushing out toxins and making you feel instantly refreshed. It tastes tart to begin with, but after a week you’ll be used to it. —Sue Holt, Managing Director and Publisher, Women’s Health Middle East and ITP Consumer Magazines

ADD CASHEW NUTS TO YOUR MORNING SMOOTHIE

— they are a fantastic antioxidant. They impart a beautiful, buttery flavour and are great with strawberries and fresh coconut. —Paul Ryan, Executive Chef at Fortnum and Mason

THE DAY BEFORE YOU DO YOUR WEEKLY SHOPPING, take all your leftovers and create fun, “clean up” dishes—ideally stews, lasagna, salads, pasta dishes, paellas, or you can create your very own selection of tapas. I’ve created some really nice dishes by some of these “clean up exercises”! And as an added benefit, by the end of the day the fridge is again ready for a new refill. —Dirk Haltenhof, Executive Chef, The Oberoi, Dubai

I ALREADY HAVE A VITA MIX AND GREEN STAR MASTICATING JUICER, and the next item on my wish list is a Paco Jet. I hate wasting food, and this piece of equipment minimises waste and creates the most delicate texture, and saves time too! —Turner Francis, Founder and Owner, Coco Yoga

MY MUM TOLD ME NEVER TO WASTE — so when vegetables are starting to turn in my fridge,

When using prawns, don’t throw away the heads and shells. Stick olive oil in a pan with chopped chilli, garlic and onion, sauté until golden and add the shells and heads. Squeeze them to get the juices flowing, add some liquid of your choice and orange or lemon peel, and cook it for few mins.

Strain, and there you have it... a beautiful sauce for your pasta.

—Sergio Lopez, Managing Director, Tom & Serg



I make pickle. Simply fry off some onions and garlic with a little olive oil. Lightly blanch your vegetable of choice and add to the pan. To taste, add just the right amount of vinegar, sugar and salt for a tart, slightly salty flavour and seal in a glass jar. After a week of maturing, it’s ready to go. —Tom Arnel, Managing Director, Tom & Serg

WHEN READING FOOD LABELS AT YOUR FAVOURITE MARKET,

here are some tips for understanding what the label is really telling you: Avoid products that contain “artificial flavourings” and “natural flavourings”! These are general terms that when translated actually mean flavour enhancers, and manufacturers are not required to disclose exactly what they are! These terms usually can indicate that wheat, corn, gluten and soy are present. Other terms to look out for are: Caramel Colour, Dextrin,

INVEST IN AN OMELETTE PAN

— now that we have one, there’s no other way to make omelettes in our house! It makes all omelettes bigger, fluffier and more delicious... and breakfast is the most important meal of the day! —Andrew Wingrove, Deputy Managing Director and Publisher, Men’s Health Middle East and ITP Men’s Lifestyle Magazines

SPEND TIME ON FOOD PREP!

Make an effort to dedicate one day a week to preparing ingredients that you can easily whip up into healthy meals, so you never have an excuse to reach for “bad” foods. Also, soak your nuts before eating them—it makes them taste better, and is much healthier. —Christina Luciw, Food Blogger at SweetAndSans.com

FOR THOSE WHO CAN’T RESIST DESSERT,

the Yonanas maker uses a special technology to create a dairy-free alternative to ice cream using frozen fruit, which is fed through a juicer-like

machine to create a bowlful of indulgence from as little as 100 calories per serving... love!

– Jasmine Bandali, Editor, *Ahlan!* Gourmet magazine

START YOUR DAY WITH A VEGETABLE JUICE – it's the only way to make sure you get in your five-a-day no matter how busy you are, and you can now just grab it and go! –Andrew Nagy, Editor-in-Chief, *Men's Health Middle East*

WHEN YOU HAVE RIPE FRUIT THAT WON'T BE EATEN SOON (ESPECIALLY BANANAS), rather than throwing them out, peel them and cut them into pieces then freeze them in a zip-lock bag—then they're always on hand to throw into a smoothie. I also always sneak spinach into my smoothies—you can't taste it, but it helps you get an extra boost of vitamins. Another great idea for food storage? I love fresh bread but we never seem to finish an entire loaf—so I chop the leftovers up and put it into a food processor to make breadcrumbs. Or, you can cut it into pieces then mix it with some oil and seasoning to make homemade croutons. –Lindsay Krist, Junior Designer, *Women's Health Middle East*

TO MAKE A QUICK, EASY AND DELICIOUS HOMEMADE CURRY WHEN YOU'RE SHORT ON TIME, spice up a store-bought packet of curry sauce by adding some shallow-fried tomatoes, onions, garlic and ginger to it. Cook them until they're soft for a smoother texture, then once it's all blended together, garnish it with some fresh coriander and curry leaves for an extra oomph. –Girish Masand, Art Director, *Women's Health Middle East*

I CAN'T GET ENOUGH OF MY PHILIPS AIR FRYER – I use it practically every day for everything from potatoes to meat. It's fast, cooks items with just one tablespoon of oil (if an at all), and it's super easy to clean—and most importantly,

it makes everything taste amazing. –Victoria Wright, Sales Manager, *Women's Health Middle East*

SWEET POTATO FRIES ARE MY ALL-TIME FAVOURITE FOOD INDULGENCE THAT DOESN'T FEEL TOO SINFUL. I tried so many recipes before finding a simple failsafe formula: Cut them as thin as possible, coat with just the lightest smear of oil—plus salt and paprika—then bake at a high heat for 15 minutes before flipping and baking for another fifteen. That's it! –Hannah Bass, Deputy Editor, *Women's Health Middle East*

BEFORE USING CLAMS, SOAK THEM IN SALTY WATER (with 30g of salt per litre of water) and let them rest for one hour in the dark—this way the clams come out of the shell to drink the salty water, releasing all the sand outside of the shell and helping you avoid having a sandy taste in your mouth! For octopus, don't cook it in boiling water—simmer it in stock for up to three hours, so it ends up crunchy outside and tender inside. –Christian de Nadai, Head Chef at *Don Alfonso 1890*

WHEN YOU'RE BAKING, try this to easily separate egg yolk from the white without splitting the yolk: Crack all the eggs into a bowl one at a time. After each egg, take a clean, empty plastic bottle (a 500ml bottle works). Squeeze the bottle and move the open end over the yolk—the yolk will be sucked inside, leaving the white behind. Then hold the bottle over a separate



For the best chocolate chip cookies, put the dough into a covered bowl and refrigerate for 48 hours before baking—it'll give you that perfect crispy-outside but chewy- and soft-inside texture. If you're going to indulge, you want to do it right so you feel like it's worth the calories! Also, if you're a fan of tacos but want to avoid eating fried shells, spoon the "stuffing" into refrigerated chicory leaves instead—they'll give you the same satisfying crunch along with plenty of vitamin A, vitamin C, calcium and fibre.

–Yi-Hwa Hanna, Editor-in-Chief, *Women's Health Middle East*

bowl and squeeze again to "release" the yolk. –Jamie Robertson, Head Chef at *Gaucha Dubai*

ALWAYS KEEP A SUPPLY OF CHICKEN AND FISH STOCK IN YOUR FREEZER – that way, when you want to make a nice soup, sauce or boil veggies, you can simply pull the bag out of the freezer. When it comes to storing spices and herbs, keep them in a cool, dark place and never above your cooker or stove—humidity, sunlight and heat will cause them to lose their flavour and colour. To jazz up a salad, homemade vinaigrettes and dressings have fewer ingredients and taste better than bottled store-bought ones. There's no need to whisk them—just put all of the ingredients into a cocktail shaker and shake vigorously! –Gerald Murphy, Chef and Head of Culinary Operations, *Just Falafel*

THE NEXT TIME YOU BUY A ROAST CHICKEN (or even a chicken meal when eating out!), why not buy an additional half

or whole chicken and use it to make a delicious lunch the next day? Mix together some of the chicken with mayonnaise, red onion and chopped gherkins for sandwiches, or toss shredded chicken in with some fresh, crispy greens for a wholesome salad! –Christian Jay Coma, *Nando's National Griller Champion*

WHEN YOU'RE CHOPPING GREENS FOR A SALAD, use a non-metallic knife to keep them from turning brown. Ceramic is great for that, and plastic works really well too. Also, if you need your avocados to ripen faster, put them into a paper bag with an apple and seal it—the ethylene gas from the apple will encourage the avocado to ripen in a couple of days. –Lena ter Laare, Editor-in-Chief, *Good Housekeeping Middle East magazine*

ADD BERRY ICE CUBES TO BRIGHTEN UP YOUR DRINKS. Put fresh berries and mint leaves into ice-cube trays, fill with water and freeze. I love colourful drinks! –Karen McLean, Blogger, Photographer and Chef at *SecretSquirrelFood.com*

DON'T HAVE A HEAVY MEAL AT NIGHT. When I stopped this habit, I slept better, felt lighter the next day and my waist is now smaller too! Also, eat fish at least twice a week. A lean, healthy source of protein, the oily kinds are a tasty way to deliver those heart-healthy omega-3 fats we need in our diet! –Rita Ghantous, Group Art Editor, *Men's Health Middle East* ■

