

**15 TRICKS**

**THAT WILL MAKE YOU**

**A BETTER COOK IN**

**THE KITCHEN**



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## 1 Cutting Boards that Serve a Purpose

I know you all have cutting boards, but if you're like most people, you have a slew of them and none of them are "the perfect cutting board". When I was in culinary school, we had coloured that you used for specific things. For example, the red boards were always used for meat. After they were used, they were always impeccably cleaned but, using boards for specific foods meant there was never a worry about cross contamination. At home, I have two boards (one for fruit/veg/bread and then another for meat/seafood). I feel like this makes people feel so much better about the "safety issue", but you still need to know how to properly care for them. If you [check out this blog post](#), it will tell you all about the perfect board as well as cleaning it properly. Once it's cleaned, you just need to give your board a bit of lovin' once a month (aka: give it a good coating of special oils made specifically for treating boards – remember that oils go rancid over time and you put your board at risk if you use just any oil). And one last tip about your boards - if you put a wet towel under your board or even one of those rubber shelf liners you can pick up at the dollar store, it stops the board from sliding around!!

## 2

## Some Interesting Things You Need in your Pantry to Put Your Baking Over the Top

### A. Condensed milk

Yes, it's fattening but man, is it good! It is basically cow's milk with much of the water removed and almost always sold sweetened. It can be used in a bunch of different ways.

- It makes a killer Thai iced tea...
- [These magic bars](#) are a childhood favourite:
- If you drizzle it into your morning coffee (if you like your coffee sweetened), it will bring your cup o' jo to a whole new level.
- And it can turn into the most incredible dulce de leche... you're probably thinking about the usual (and kinda gross) way of boiling the can for hours, but I have a unique/ mess free/hands off way of making it...check out [this post](#) for all the deliciousness!!



### B. Coconut sugar

If you are like me and you're "trying" to eat healthier, then this is a good thing to have in your pantry...and I'll tell you why. I've never been a fan of imitation sugars (i.e. all the chemically made sugars and even stevia...they're just too darn sweet). I like to have coconut sugar on hand to have in my coffee or sprinkled on grapefruit before it's broiled because it has a nutty flavour and adds sweetness without it being sweet – if that makes any sense. I feel like it can train you to adjust your sweet tooth ...and that's always a good thing, right? (Note: If you're looking for a substitute for baking, then xylitol is the best, but beware because it can be kinda pricey!)





### C. Dates

Still on the sweet conversation, dates can be a lifesaver if you are trying to reduce your sugar intake, yes they are still sweet and yes, too many can totally give you cavities (they will stick to your molars like nobody's business), but they are natural, unrefined and can be used in many ways.

- You can just snack on them for an afternoon pick-me-up.
- You can stuff them with goat cheese, wrap them in bacon and then bake them because, wouldn't that just be awesome!?!?
- You can soak them in boiling water and make a paste that can be used in a million different ways ([see this post for the simple instructions](#))



### D. Lots of different baking chips

Yes, you should always have chocolate chips in your pantry because...well, it's chocolate. But have you ever thought to mix some butterscotch chips or white chocolate chips, or peanut butter chips or salted caramel chips into your favourite chocolate chip cookie recipe? It really is a game changer. And can we also talk about adding Skor pieces to everything too? I mean, you haven't had a proper ice cream sandwich until you've had one rolled in Skor pieces. I know...that's information your waistline didn't need to know!



### E. Change up your flour game

Are you looking to reduce the amount of wheat in your diet? Well, if you're like most people, you are. Now, I don't claim to be a gluten free expert but I've done my fair share of recipe development for gluten free dishes. Some people find wheat/gluten to be inflammatory and others just want to add some more nutrient value to their baked goods. If you want the lowdown on all the different flours (and how you can store them), take a peek at [this post](#)...it will take the mystery out of it all!







### 3 The Only Knives You Need to Take Care of All Your Dicing and Slicing Needs

Many people out there think that you need to spend a boatload of money to get some magnificent knives. I'm not going to lie...buying kitchen things for me is like buying shoes for most women. Now, I do have ONE expensive knife, but that's only because I loved it when I saw it (and it was on sale!). But, as long as your knives are sharp, you can do almost anything! What you need is one good chef's knife (and the important thing here is that it fits your hand...you literally have to hold it to make sure it's the right size... usually 8-10"), one good serrated knife (for bread), a couple of good paring knives and of course a steel (what you sharpen it on!). I think everyone should get them professionally sharpened once a year, but I think it is completely manageable to keep them sharp by using a steel. If you need a lesson on how to do it, [take a peek here!](#)





## 4

# Why an Oven Thermometer will Make you a Better Baker

I know what you're thinking...and you're right. Yes, I want you to buy another kitchen gadget. But this one is so cheap (under \$10) and if you've ever struggled with baking (undercooking or overcooking) then maybe your oven is not calibrated – meaning, it's not the right temperature. If you have some baking issues (especially if your oven is old), then test it out with an oven thermometer so you can gauge your baking based on real oven temps. Read more about it in [this post about how it can help you in the kitchen!!](#)



## 5 What to Keep in your Freezer that you Would have Normally Thrown Away

It's not called hoarding when it's about food (please say I'm right!). There are things we cook with that we often throw away because we don't know what we could do with the leftovers – other than chucking it. Confused? Let me explain.

- A For example, when you need the juice or grated rind of a lemon, you often throw away what is left over, right? Well, my "save all the lemons" hack will have you using those halves for cleaning as well as freshening up the cavity of your chicken soon enough. [Check out this post here for some great info on saving your lemon halves!!](#)





## 15 Tricks That will Make you A Better Cook in the Kitchen

- B** Also, did you know that pieces of ginger are totally freezable? Especially if you don't use it that often...it will stay fresh, it grates better while it's frozen and the skin peels off better (tip: just scrape the tip of a spoon along the skin and it will come right off!)
- C** Do you want to know something else you can freeze? You know that platter of grilled veg that you made for your last bbq? Well, you can chop up the leftovers and freeze them...then you can use them in a pinch for a quick plate of pasta, in a sandwich (nothing elevates a sandwich better than grilled veg...[take a peek here for more!](#)), or scattered on your favourite pizza
- D** And how about small amounts of soup that are enough for just one more bowl but you're just not feeling the soup love this week? Well, you can use [my nifty trick of freezing it this way](#) for a great lunch or snack in the future!!
- E** And it's not all about freezing! If you have leftover bread, why not make your own breadcrumbs? You can season them however you choose and there will be no additives (unless it's in your bread!). You can even throw in some crackers for extra flavour! If you want more detail, [take a peek at this post!](#)



## 6 Semi Meal Planning Boosts Creativity in the Kitchen

I will say this right here.

I'm not a fan of meal planning.

Wait... hear me out! I don't like meal planning because I like the excitement of not knowing what I'm eating every single night – like 7 days ahead of time. Personally, I think it takes the fun out of cooking and I really believe that if you are “left to your vices” when it comes to making dinner, you can become a better cook because it forces you to get creative with what you have. Now, I'm not saying that when you get home from work at 7pm with a houseful of kids and a hungry spouse, you should start thinking about what to make at that moment (that would make for a group of very hungry people!). But, I also don't want you to make a list of what you are going to make on Sunday for the next 7 days. I think you should have a well-stocked pantry (that might be a whole other ebook) and then think this way when shopping for the week: 7-10 veggies; 7-10 proteins,



## 15 Tricks That will Make you A Better Cook in the Kitchen

7-10 fruits and fill in with things you made need to stock up your pantry (ie: rice, pasta, grains, bread). When you get home, you should prep your groceries (more on that a little further down!). Then, say Monday is a cold dreary day...I would think "let's make a pot of hearty soup with some epic grilled quesadillas and a salad". Then Tuesday you might make a meatloaf. If you have leftover soup from Monday and you have leftover meatloaf from Tuesday, then Wednesday can be hot meatloaf sandwiches with some more soup and maybe a platter of raw veg with a dip. If you plan every night ahead of time, you may have leftovers that you will never deal with (and may be thrown away).

Try it when you have a few days off to see how it feels. I bet you'll love it when Thursday night's meatballs become Friday night's meatball sub!!







## **7** Some Healthy Tips for Breakfast That will Have You Trying New Foods

Here are some awesome ideas to make your mornings quicker (and healthier!!):





Try whipping up a batch of overnight oats. They take seconds to make and can fuel you in a bunch of different ways all week long ([check this post out](#) for some creative ways to use it)



Looking for more protein in the morning? How about some [make ahead burritos??](#) These breakfast burritos can be customized to suit your palate and can even be frozen and reheated in a few minutes as you head out the door!!



Are you a morning smoothie person? Or do you just wanna be a morning smoothie person but don't have the energy in the mornings to figure out what goes in a protein smoothie? Well, either way, you're going to thank me for showing you how to whip up these make ahead smoothie packs, protein powder and all. Yes, it's always nice to add it what floats your boat each morning, but for those days you don't want to think, these can be a life saver! Don't believe me? [Check this out!!](#)



And what about those of you that don't even think about breakfast until you are already out the door? Well, these oatmeal to go bags can be a lifesaver because you keep them in your car's glove box and all you need is a cup of hot water (make friends with your local barista!!) and you are good to go! For step by step instructions, [take a peek at this post!](#)



## 8 Try a Vegan Meal Once a Week To Take the Fear Out of Feeding Others on Special Diets

I know, I know...you're not vegan.

But neither am I...and I still try to cook vegan every so often. Not only will it make you re-think your vegetable situation (you can honestly make incredible meals with just vegetables), and give you something to work with if you ever have vegan guests, but it will also make you think outside the box when trying to figure out how to get some "meaty bulk" in your meals without meat.



- A** When I stopped eating meat for a while (I thought I couldn't digest it but it turned out to be something else!), I started getting creative with things in my fridge that might taste "meaty". Well, you know what? Mushrooms turned out to be one of the answers. They take on the flavour of whatever you're cooking and mixed with some toasted walnuts, they taste like a pretty darn yummy version of a Bolognese! ([Check out this recipe \(which also happens to be gluten free!!\)](#))



- B** Have you ever tried to make dessert with no eggs? Well, of course you have! An apple crisp is egg free and pretty darn tasty. But what about making a meringue without egg whites? Say what?? Oh yes you can!! I discovered aquafaba waaaaay before everyone was talking about it (by accident, when I needed an egg substitute, and a chef in France was using this!!). It's not only super easy to use, but it makes use of something that would normally be garbage (and you know how much I like that?!). The possibilities are endless but start with something simple...[take a peek here](#) and go nuts!!



- C** Now, how about playing around with some non-dairy cheese? No, not that icky stuff you buy at the store...I'm talking creamy queso that can turn into mac and cheese... and you make it yourself!?!? [Take a peek here](#) for a nutritious creamy cheese that will really make you re-think your dairy intake (and your cholesterol will thank you!!).





- D And have you ever [made your own bacon?](#) Without pork? Seriously...all you need is carrots and liquid smoke. I'm talking easy peasy and you will be so proud of yourself when you see what you can do!!



- E And we can't forget about dessert, can we!? Well this [vegan peanut butter and chocolate nice cream](#) is healthy and easy (using leftover bananas as the base).

All of these vegan dishes are easy to make and will definitely make you re-think that last minute stop at the grocery store because all you need it's a bit of ground beef. If you do this once a week, you will not only save a few bucks but you will start thinking about the protein you put on your plate differently!!







## 9 Rethink your leftovers

This one is like not pre-planning your meals, but a bit different This point is more about taking something and figuring out how to use it. Yes it's about eliminating waste, but in doing so, it gets those creative juices flowing to get you thinking in a totally different way!



Why not make the most of your leftover coffee? Not sure what I mean? Well, using your leftover coffee to make ice cubes can wow your guests when you throw them in a blender with some almond milk and Baileys for the best summertime treat!!



And what about that last bit of juice that will make you drink more water? I know you're questioning this one! [But take a peek here](#) to see how having a few of these in your freezer can liven up any plain ol' glass of water...really!!



Why not take your leftover meatloaf and turn them into meatloaf burgers? It's honestly a game changer!! Slice up your meatloaf (and [this recipe](#) is pretty epic if you don't have a good recipe for meatloaf!) and put it in a hot pan to crisp up the outside (do both sides) then add a piece of cheese and cover it to make it all melty while you toast 2 pieces of buttered white bread (yup, you heard right!)... sandwich the bread around the meatloaf and you will cry happy meatloaf tears...promise!!

What kind of inventive way have you changed your leftovers??





## 10 Prebake Recipe for your an Favourite Pie Shell Instant Dessert

I know it sounds weird to just [prebake pie shells](#) without having a plan for them (like an epic lemon meringue pie...which is also a great idea). But why not have a few on hand and see what your creative brain thinks of? I've used pre-baked shells that I make in mini- spring form pans for a quick meal (imagine filling it with crumbled goat cheese and thickly sliced Ontario tomatoes, a drizzle of olive oil, some sea salt and some torn fresh basil...heaven!!).

And, how easy is dessert when you have some fresh peaches (or berries) and a couple of these shells? Just add a handful of sliced peaches, a drizzle of honey and a scoop of vanilla bean ice cream and, if you have any visitors, you will have friends forever!!



## 11 How to Make a Perfect Plate of Pasta

I know we are all really watching our carbs lately (even I've taken on this weight loss tidbit occasionally!), but we need carbs. And I need carbs in the form of pasta every so often especially if you don't want to see my "ugly" side. Carbs in the form of pasta (and bread) make me happy. But if you're going to indulge, make sure it's worth it. And, my tips for making the perfect plate of pasta are all [on this blog post](#).

When you're short on time, pasta is a great way to begin a meal and use it as your "canvas" to create some pretty epic meals. They can be decadent or simple, but you need to know a few things to make it amazing. [Follow my four rules](#) and you won't ever make a bad plate of pasta again!





**12**

## Double Duty Dishes are the Name of the Game

So many recipes can play double duty...when one dish becomes two or three! Need some guidance here? Let's give you a head start:



Meatballs

They can be made ahead and then frozen in big batches so you can throw them in the oven or in a sauce to make an instant meal. But, if you heat up a hot cast iron pan (or a grill) and place a meatball down with a little squish, it makes the best slider burger you'll ever have! Double duty indeed! [Check out this post for all the deets!](#)



Cookie dough

Have you ever bought frozen cookie dough for those local fundraisers? I've bought it (for the kids' sake) but it's so easy to make on your own, that you won't believe how great it is to have this on hand at all times. If you make my [Oatmeal Chocolate Chip Skor cookies](#) (seriously, one of the best cookies you'll ever eat...everyone who has them says that!!), you'll not only have some for dessert, but you'll have loads to freeze for whenever the cookie monster in you wants a hot, fresh cookie!!



Tomato sauce

Yes the simple sauce that graces every Italian stove top on Sundays (or at least it used to) is so versatile. Once you've made a big pot, you can freeze it in small quantities; you can make some pasta and mix it in for a quick dinner, you can spread it on pizza; you can top a meatloaf with it; you can puree it with some chopped up cucumber, hot sauce and parsley and serve it as a cold soup, you can add chicken stock and a splash of cream and make a hot soup...you get the picture!!

If you need a fail proof recipe to make your own batch, [click here!](#)





## 13 Make the Most of Your Fresh Herbs

Do you have a garden? If you do, I'm sure you have your fair share of fresh herbs throughout the summer (even if you don't have a garden, they are so cheap at the store that I am sure your fridge is full of them all season long!!!). Want to "up your game" in the kitchen? Nothing screams freshness more than using fresh herbs. Yes, dried herbs have magnificent flavour but it's intense and not the same as fresh. Push your dishes to the next level by using lots of fresh herbs to make your food sing!

### A. Parsley Under oil

This magic elixir (as I like to call it) is the most amazing thing to have in your fridge...you can use it on chicken, to start a sauce, in dressing or even just drizzled over toasted bread. It gives you an edge when you cook because it adds that zing from the garlic and the freshness from the parsley that makes every dish you add it to extra special. Make your own elixir by [clicking here!](#)



### B. Parsley Puree

What if you just don't want (or can't stomach) the garlic? Then the answer is to make up a batch [of parsley puree](#). You freeze it in cubes and use it as a way to freshen up any sauce or use it as a base to make some quick pesto. Either way, it's a winner in my books!



### C. Freezing Your Herbs

Guess what? You can actually freeze your herbs and have them defrost pretty amazingly close to how they were frozen? How you ask? Put them under oil!! [Take a peek at this post](#) to see how you can have some "fresh" sage to brown in some butter and then top some yummy ravioli with and drizzle with some truffle oil without even having to worry about having fresh sage!! Imagine!!





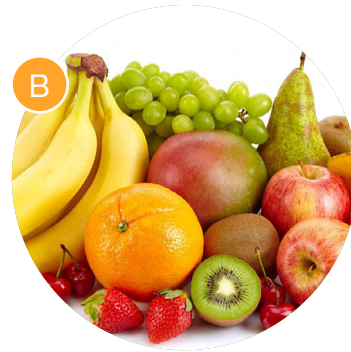


## 14 Prep Your Groceries When you Get Home

This may seem like a no-brainer but, if you're like me, doing something with your groceries other than just throwing them in the fridge, is sometimes a monumental task. But once you get used to "mildly prepping" your groceries, you won't ever just chuck them in the fridge again.



If you buy large packages of meat/fish/proteins, divide it up into two portion packs. Even if you are a family of 6, having them portioned off means you have the option of quickly defrosting a few portions at a time. That way, if you just need two chicken breasts to poach and put in a salad, you don't have to defrost 23 pieces!



Wash your fruit as soon as you get home so people will be more likely to eat it (when I'm in a hurry, I might grab a granola bar instead of an apple if it means I have to wash it!). This makes it way healthier!



Clean your salad as soon as you get home...wash it and store it in a tea towel, then wrap it and put the whole thing in a large plastic ziplock bag (keeping it open)...it will stay fresh way longer this way!





## 15 Butter Makes Everything Better

It really does! Brown your butter to give something a nutty taste; slather fresh butter on out-of-the-oven bread for the ultimate snack; top your steak with some herbed butter and watch it melt into the meat...I mean, isn't that the most luxurious thing of all? Here are a few ways to elevate your butter game:

- A** When your favourite butter is on sale, buy a bunch and freeze it...it keeps much better that way if you buy lots!



- B** If you have lots of whipping cream, why not make a batch of fresh butter? That way you can flavour it however you like ...and it makes a fantastic hostess gift!! You can make your own by whipping the cream until the whey separates from the butter (keep the whey for protein shakes or even add it to your Sunday pancake batter). Once you remove the butter, add in whatever flavorings like matcha. Add whatever suits your fancy to make it your own!



- C** If you're ever caught with hard butter, you can soften it a few different ways...[check this post out](#) for a few nifty ways to never be caught off guard again!!





So, that's it people!! I really hope that these 15 tips will get you back into the kitchen and cooking new and exciting things with ease! Even if you want to keep making the same 5 dishes you've always made, these tips might make you see those dishes a little bit differently! Always made meatloaf? Well, now your family might think you are a superhero when that meatloaf becomes crispy, juicy meatloaf sandwiches to have when you all break bread together at the table!!

Please let me know if you've tried any of these tips and how they've changed your kitchen game. Tag me on social media!! I'll repost your incredible dishes with pleasure!!

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