

food notes

Get pasta right. New ways with naan. Chinese restaurant-style veggies. Digest these cooking tips from master chefs of the World Gourmet Summit.



zhang jin jie,
owner/chef of Green Tea House, Beijing
what's the best way to cook vegetables? Frying isn't always the best way. I prefer to steam or blanch the vegetables and mix with light sauces and condiments. That way, you can savour their natural juices.

you cook with tea leaves and even flowers. Suggest a simple tea leaf dish that one can prep at home. Make green tea pesto at home with Oolong tea: mix the tea with fresh basil, minced garlic, mint leaves, mustard seeds, pickles, white onion, apple vinegar, olive oil, black sesame seeds, capers and cilantro. Finish off with a splash of vodka. Use it as a side dip or a sauce base.
what kind of flowers can I use to prettify a dish? Rose petals, fresh lavender, angel's breath, chrysanthemum. Make sure they're pesticide free!



ettore bocchia,
executive chef of Grand Hotel Villa Serbelloni, Lake of Como, Italy
Aglio olio is the easiest pasta to make yet the most difficult. What's the secret? Don't go overboard with the olive oil and garlic, and always add peperoncino. The red, wrinkly chillies have a slightly sweet edge that lends flavour to the pasta.
what are the basic must-have herbs for Italian cooking? You only need oregano, basil and parsley – perfect for aglio olio!
when do I use normal and extra virgin olive oil? Olive oil can be used for all purposes, as long as your cooking doesn't require heat that's above 140°C. Use extra virgin for final touches, like drizzling over salads and as a bread dip.

arun sampanthavivat,
owner/chef of Arun's, Chicago
how do I keep my pantry stocked for Thai cooking? You can make basic tom yam soup with garlic, chilli peppers, lemongrass, kaffir lime leaves and cilantro.
how else can I use Thai green curry paste besides a curry? Use it to stir-fry meat or seafood. It's very fragrant.
how do you make the perfect zesty Thai papaya salad? Lime is the answer. You absolutely cannot do without it!



david laris,
executive chef of Mezzo, London
can I make do with just one pan at home? Have two. A non-stick frying pan is good for things like omelettes. A 30cm iron pan is for cooking meat – a non-stick pan doesn't heat up enough.
what's the secret to al dente pasta? Throw a piece of pasta against a tile. If it sticks, it's done. It sounds silly but it works! Dunk the pasta in cold water right away so that it stops cooking.

how do I get baked salmon deliciously raw and pink in the centre and cooked on the outside? Cook the salmon for about 1½ minutes on each side in a hot pan to seal in the flavour and juices. Then pop the pan into the oven and bake for three minutes. Take the pan out, let it sit for a minute and the salmon will have a nice pink centre.

hemant obero,
executive chef of Taj Mahal Hotel, Mumbai
indian food can be too spicy for some, what can they start off with? Try what I call Cali-Indian – Indian food with a touch of Californian influence: Toss up Caesar salad with chicken tikka, mint powder and low-fat yoghurt dressing; make a nazza, a cross between naan and pizza. Smear the naan generously with spiced tomato and grill. Top with your favourite meat.

how can I cook basmati rice besides a biryani? Dish up a basic pilau. Throw cardamom, cumin, cinnamon sticks and bay leaves into hot oil (the spices must crackle) and fry for a few minutes before mixing with rice.

