

## NOTES RE: COOKING FOR ONE

*When you are preparing meals just for yourself, it can seem like a lot of work at first. However, cooking for one doesn't have to be complicated, and over the years I have found great tips that can help you along the way. Here are some things to consider when cooking for one:*

Tip – Roasting vegetables, roast at 425-degrees for best results. Also cut them into evenly sliced pieces so that they cook for the same amount of time, and do not overcrowd them in the roasting pan. These methods work wonderfully with carrots, broccoli, butternut squash, and cauliflower.

Tip for making a substitute for Buttermilk – If you don't have buttermilk, you can make your own by mixing ½ cup whole milk with ½ tablespoon lemon juice or white vinegar. Let this mixture sit for 10 minutes at room temperature prior to using.

Tip for making the best pasta salad. Short pasta works best in a pasta salad. Choose a pasta shape with curves and ridges that will hold up well when tossed with your other ingredients. Cook the pasta until just slightly underdone. Overcooked pasta will fall apart when mixed with dressing. Add in the remaining ingredients when the pasta is cool.

What to do with leftover wine. You can freeze wine by pouring it into ice cube trays and placing the trays in the freezer. When you want to add a little wine in a recipe, pop out one of the frozen wine cubes and add it to your recipe!

Cooking rice for one tip – Cook a large batch of brown or white rice and freeze it in individual portions using a muffin pan. Once frozen, pop the rice discs out of the muffin pan and freeze in a zip-top bag; then whenever you need a single serving of rice, just heat up one of the frozen discs.

What to do with leftover beans. Since most recipes for one use only a portion or half a can of beans consider freezing the remainder in a freezer-safe container until ready to use. If you plan on using the beans within the next few days, you

can keep them in an airtight container in the refrigerator. Use leftover beans in soups, stews, salads or even scrambled eggs.

What to do with leftover canned tomatoes. Transform leftover canned tomatoes into a quick salsa! Just add chopped onions, chopped green peppers, a touch of salt, lime juice and black pepper.

Tip – For the juiciest chicken, after removing the chicken from the oven, cover it with a sheet of aluminum foil for at least 5 to 10 minutes before serving so that the juices will soak back into the meat rather than pouring out as you cut into it.

Freezing Chicken – consider keeping chicken pieces in the freezer so you can easily pull one out, defrost it, and cook it when ready. Look for chicken breasts or thighs when on sale or buy the “family packs”. Then immediately divide, individually wrap and freeze pieces for later use. The USDA recommends freezing chicken breasts no longer than nine months for optimal quality.

Using Sun-Dried Tomatoes: Sun-dried tomatoes make a wonderful salad topping and they are also delicious in omelets, over chicken and in other entrees. They are often sold two ways; packed in oil or dry-packed. It’s more convenient to purchase the tomatoes in oil but less expensive to purchase them dried. Both are wonderful in recipes, but the dried version will need to be rehydrated before using. To rehydrate, soak them in hot water for 10 – 12 minutes.

Tip for cooking Pork Chops: To guarantee tender and juicy pork chops every single time, first be sure to season the pork before cooking to enhance the texture and taste. Second, do not cook the pork straight from the refrigerator. Instead, remove it from the refrigerator 10 minutes before you are ready to cook it, so it cooks more evenly. Third, follow the cooking time in the recipe to avoid overcooking. And finally, let the pork rest for 8 – 10 minutes after cooking - this will give you a juicier and tender piece of meat.

How to bake a single serving of rice; For an individual helping of rice, simply add ¼ cup rice, ¾ cup water, ¼ tablespoon butter and 1/8<sup>th</sup> teaspoon kosher salt to an oven-safe ramekin or 5” x 5” baking dish. Preheat your oven to 325-degrees and

then bake the rice for 40 minutes until the water is absorbed and the rice is tender.

What are the best non-alcoholic substitutes for wine? If you're cooking and realize that you don't have any wine on hand or you want to leave out the alcohol, don't fret. You can substitute chicken or vegetable broth, red or white wine vinegar, or lemon juice. Also note, almost all grocery stores sell non-alcoholic wine, both red and white. I do not recommend using cooking wine.

Do you need to remove the vein in shrimp? The "vein" in a shrimp is not truly a vein. It is actually a part of the digestive tract. Sometimes the vein is very prominent, and other times you will barely notice it. The vein isn't really harmful if you eat it; however, it can add a gritty texture. To remove the vein, make a shallow cut with a sharp knife along the back of the shrimp and gently pull the vein out with the tip of the knife. The vein is always on the back side of the shrimp.

When cooking shrimp for one, keeping your freezer stocked with a few bags of frozen shrimp will make it easy to whip up a wonderful, quick and easy meal in just minutes.

What is a mirepoix (meer-pwah)? In French cooking, it is a combination of onion, celery and carrots, diced small. In Cajun cooking, it is known as the Holy trinity and it consists of onion, green bell pepper and celery. The ratio is 2 parts onion to one part celery and carrots. The same is true for the trinity, 2 parts onion to one part pepper and celery.

What is a Chermoule? It's a bright and flavorful North African condiment mixture much like a pesto. It's made with cilantro and parsley leaves, garlic, olive oil, lemon juice and a mix of spices. You can either chop the cilantro and parsley by hand or add them to a food processor to finely chop. This is traditionally used to enhance the flavor of fish, soups, stews, chicken and grilled meats.

Smart shopping tip: Consider purchasing boxed wine. Once opened, bottles of wine can go bad after a few days or weeks. Boxed wine has an airtight inner bag that prevents exposure to oxygen even after the box is opened, so it can last longer. And remember, you can freeze wine too.

Storing butter – you can freeze butter, wrapped tightly in plastic wrap, for up to six months or more. Take what you need to keep in the refrigerator and freeze the rest. You can remove a stick from the freezer and let it defrost in the refrigerator.

Storing tomato paste – you can store leftover tomato paste by freezing it in ice cube trays and then transferring it to a zip-loc bags and keeping them in the freezer until you need it.

What is the difference between a Crisp, Crumble, and Cobbler? It's easy to get confused by crisp, crumbles and cobblers; they all seem so similar. However, there are differences between each dessert. A crisp is a fruit dessert with streusel-like topping that contains oats. A crumble also contains fresh fruit with a streusel-like topping, but the topping is not made with oats. A cobbler has a biscuit topping over the fresh fruit.