

Transcript Season 3 Episode 8: How to Follow a Recipe & Tips for Measuring

Podcast Opener:

(Music playing.) Tackle your “Adulting” To Do list with the Grown Up U: Facts for Success podcast. Keep listening as we celebrate Season 3 with podcasts to help steer you in the right direction by providing useful advice for living an independent and satisfying life as a young adult. *(Music ends.)*

Podcast Script:

Valerie Turner: “Oh no, I thought I was making a cake not a hubcap. This will never do.” If you have ever tried to cook or bake something but it didn’t turn out quite like it should, then this is a podcast you don’t want to miss.

Greetings, I’m Valerie Turner the FCS agent in Monroe County. Today’s podcast is going to teach you what it means to “follow” a recipe, and the differences in measuring. So, hopefully the next time you cook something, “Oh No” won’t be this first thing you say about the finished product.

Almost everyone loves food and loves to eat. But not everyone loves to cook. Many people don’t like the hassle of gathering all the ingredients and messing up all the dishes while others don’t like to cook because they “never seem to get the recipe right or don’t think they can cook.”

For all of you who don’t think you can cook or get it right. Let me let you in on a little secret, many if not all cooking failures have to do with not following the recipe or not measuring correctly.

Let’s start with reading and following a recipe. The recipe is the directions needed for making whatever you want to make. It doesn’t matter if you plan to make cookies, pudding, spaghetti, or beef stew, by following the recipe correctly you will be ensured of a delicious ending. Here

are five tips for following a recipe. The first and most important **is read your recipe thoroughly before doing anything else.**

Any good recipe should include a list of ingredients with the amounts used and the directions for making the finished product. Always start by reading the entire recipe before doing anything else. Reading the entire recipe will give you important information including the list of ingredients with the amounts required for each item and in the order, they will be assembled. You will also find out the cooking time and temperature requirements, size of correct cooking equipment to use and the number and size of servings the recipe makes. There is nothing worse than getting in the middle of a recipe only to discover you don't have any eggs or that you only have a one quart pot, and the recipe calls for a 24 quart.

Tip two, is measuring and assembling. After reading a recipe, do all prep work first. Assemble necessary equipment such as mixing bowls, measuring cups and spoons, pots or pans, and all ingredients. Do any washing, chopping, and measuring out all the small ingredients. While this step sounds more labor intensive than measuring as you go, it actually saves time.

Something I do to keep from messing up several containers, for say your spices in a recipe, is set out the spices in order of use then put the measuring spoon needed beside each. This allows me to know I have the spice and enough for my recipe as well as being ready to go when it is called for and no extra dish to clean. A recipe may instruct you to mix all your spices before putting them into another element of the recipe. When this is required, it is important to mix in a separate bowl.

Tip three, no substitutions. We all have different dietary restrictions and preferences but changing the ingredients in a recipe can cause it to fail. This is especially true for baked goods. One example is gluten-free flour. Using coconut flour in place of all-purpose gluten-free flour won't work because not all gluten-free flours work the same. Even leaving out the pecans in a chocolate chip cookie recipe may not give you the exact same flavor to the cookies as if you put them in. It's best to find a recipe that uses ingredients that fit your needs. From cookbooks to

the internet, there is usually a recipe, somewhere, for whatever you are hungry to make that is suitable to your dietary needs or preferences.

Tip four. Order is everything. Recipes have a flow, so follow the steps in the order they are written. We all want shortcuts; however, following the correct order of a recipe ensures success.

The last tip is my favorite and usually something I do to every recipe I have ever made a second time, it is called tweak and tinker. After you've made the recipe once, it's time for experimentation. If you don't first prepare the recipe as written, it's hard to gauge what needs to be tweaked. Jot down some notes. Does it need more seasoning? A few more onions? Write down what you loved and what you would like to change. Then make one change at a time. If you change too many things at once, you will not know what went wrong if you don't like the outcome. Soon you'll have a recipe that's perfect for your palate.

One thing not mentioned in the five tips for following a recipe is the importance of knowing the meaning of cooking abbreviations, methods, and terms. Before one can follow a recipe with any accuracy, knowledge of such terms as teaspoon, tablespoon, chop, dice, boil, poach, and bake, to name a few, are a must. This podcast is not long enough to cover every cooking abbreviation, method, and term you might come across in your favorite recipe, but I highly recommend a quick internet search or dictionary look-up of any unfamiliar term you come across when you first read your recipe.

Now we know how to properly follow a recipe, let's tackle the second sabotaging factor of many a recipe gone wrong, correct measurement. Not all cups are the same. To illustrate let me tell you of how Daddy Kilgore made his famous "powdered cherry drink." He always used the correct size container for mixing but how he measured the sugar was a different story. You see he believed a cup was just a cup, so when the directions called for a cup of sugar, his favorite cup was one of those famous red party cups. Which by the way, holds almost a cup and a half

or more of sugar. I bet every one of you can imagine how sweet his cherry drink was. Can we say sugar high for a week?

Correct measuring cups and proper use are important. Every cook should have measuring cups and spoons in their kitchen. These are essential tools of trade that can be basic and inexpensive. You should have a set of measuring spoons, liquid measuring cups and dry measuring cups.

Let's start with the liquid measuring cups. These are what you will use to measure ingredients such as milk, water, and oil. The basic style is usually clear with measurements on the side. It will have a handle for pouring and a spout. There should also be plenty of head room in case ingredients expand and to help prevent spillage. The most useful types are heat proof, microwave safe glass for hot ingredients as well as cool. To read accurately, put the cup on a flat surface and get eye level so you can see the measurement clearly.

Sticky liquids such as honey or syrup are best measured after first coating the measuring cup with cooking spray and then pouring in the ingredient to be measured. This will allow the honey to easily leave the cup. For ingredients such as peanut butter or shorting, pack into the cup using a spatula, to remove air pockets, and then leveled using the back of a knife.

Dry ingredients such as flour and sugar should be measured using dry measuring cups. They come in sets of graduated sizes for 1/4, 1/3, 1/2, and 1 cup. For items such as rice and sugar, use the dip and sweep method then level with the back of a knife.

Flour and powdered sugar require a little more effort for measuring. Flour can become compacted and needs to be stirred before being spooned into the measuring cup and leveled. Powdered sugar needs to be sifted to remove any lumps, then spooned into the measuring cup and leveled off. Brown sugar contains more moisture than regular sugar so pack it firmly before leveling off.

Reading your recipe carefully should also tell you if your flour will need to be sifted. If the recipe calls for three cups of sifted flour, then you need to sift the flour before measuring. On the

other hand, if one cup, flour, sifted is called for, measure the flour then sift into your mixing bowl.

Measuring spoons are used for dry and liquid measurements. They come in graduated sizes of 1/8, 1/4, 1/2, 1 teaspoon and 1 tablespoon. When measuring dry ingredients, dip your spoon in, and then level off with the back of a knife. If measuring liquids, hold the spoon level over a dish and fill completely.

Whether measuring dry ingredients or liquid, always do your measuring over a separate container then put your measured amount into where you are mixing. This will prevent spilling more of an ingredient than you need into the mix.

Reading and following the recipe correctly including, applying the importance of using standardized measuring cups and spoons in measuring ingredients correctly and accurately will result in a product turning out properly and consistently every time it is prepared.

The next time you go to make a new recipe, make sure you read thoroughly, measure first and properly, don't use substitutions, and follow the instructions in order: tweaking and tinkering after you have made a successfully finished product.

A quick disclaimer to what has been said, there are many factors that can cause your baking or cooking not to result in the product you were hoping for BUT if you do not follow your recipe correctly nor measure correctly, other things such as altitude, oven not holding temperature, and poor-quality ingredients are the least of your worries.

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