



PETE GAWTRY  
**FI**NESS

# COOKING SKILLS GUIDE

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# INTRODUCTION

Have you ever gotten halfway through cooking a meal only to realise that you don't know how long it takes to roast a potato? By the time you've done a Google search and scrolled to the crucial information you need, the chicken has burnt, the side salad has gone soggy, and you're left wondering why you even bother.

We've all been there. Everyone is a basic cook at one point in their life, and it's a steep learning curve. But you need to keep at it. Once you've mastered the basics of roasting, boiling, scrambling and steaming, you can cook anything.

Understanding the basic principles of cooking is essential to anyone who wants to prioritise their health. Yes, the food you get in restaurants and takeaway shops is delicious but more often than not it's because they pack the meals with obscene amounts of oil, fat, salt and sugar.

Knowing how to cook for yourself will improve your life in so many ways. Once you've learnt how to make pasta sauce from scratch, you'll never pay for a salty, sugary, additive filled supermarket bottle again. You can make an enormous batch of fresh Napoli and enjoy it over and over again.

Once you've mastered cooking a tender chicken breast with just a few simple herbs and spices and a side salad with a homemade dressing, you'll wonder why you ever spent so much money and calories on dirty old Nando's.

	Nando's two drumsticks, Portuguese rice & Caesar salad	Homemade Roast Chicken, brown rice & Caesar salad side
Calories	928	466
Protein	46	41
Carbohydrate	87	24
Fat	73	13



Save money and time by cooking in bulk



Enjoy quality meals with family and friends



Enjoy full control over your calories and macros



Save eating out for special occasions and enjoy it more



Eat more sustainably by cutting back on takeaway packaging

## WHAT YOU'LL GET FROM THIS GUIDE

To take the stress out of cooking, we wanted to create a book that had everything you need to know in one place - no more flicking through tabs or recipe books. If a recipe calls for a roast chicken, a steamed courgette or a poached egg, just open this eBook.

It's also perfect for learning the basics. If you move through this book and cook each item, you'll be able to use what you've learned to create thousands of recipes. Cook them all a few times, and you won't even need the book anymore; you'll know how to roast a leg of lamb off by heart.



## All great meals have one thing in common – they taste good.

The number of ingredients, the complexity of the process or the cookware you're using won't mean anything if the end result doesn't taste good.

You know what you like, but learning the science behind taste will make you a better cook. When you know which flavours work together and which flavours don't, you'll be able to freestyle in the kitchen and come up with your own creations.

Luckily, learning about taste is pretty simple; there are just five main tastes you need to learn about.

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### Salty

This one's pretty easy. We all know that too much salt is bad news for our health, but that doesn't stop us reaching for the shaker when we're staring at a bowl of hot chips. Saltiness is essential in creating a well-balanced flavour profile, and if you're cooking for yourself, you have more control over your intake and can limit it when you need to. You can also substitute table salt for healthier options like Himalayan rock salt, anchovies or olives.

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### Sour

A 'sour' taste is your tastebuds way of picking up on acidity in foods. Your taste buds pick up on hydrogen ions from organic acids in foods like citrus fruits, tamarind and even some leafy greens. Fermented foods, like yoghurt or sauerkraut, as well as foods that have been vinegared, will also have a sour taste profile.

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### Sweet

Most people gravitate towards sweet foods. Why? Because our bodies associate sweetness with sugar, which is a core source of energy. Excessive sugar consumption will wreak havoc on your health, but there are plenty of healthy ways to add a little sweetness to your plate through foods like fresh fruit, honey or certain vegetables.

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### Bitter

Bitterness is a complex flavour. A lot of bitter compounds are actually toxic, which is why you may turn your nose up at bitter foods. But, harnessing the power of this taste opens up a whole new world of flavours. And, bitterness is also associated with many high antioxidant ingredients like dark chocolate and cruciferous vegetables like Brussels sprouts and broccoli.

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### Umami

This is the most recently discovered flavour, and it refers to tastes that are savoury and meaty. It is a Japanese word meaning 'good flavour' and was identified by Japanese chemist Kikuhane Ikeda. He was able to isolate glutamic acid in foods displaying this taste. Soy sauce, cheese, asparagus and meat are all great providers of this excellent taste.



**So, you're committed** to staying away from Uber Eats, Deliveroo and walking down to your local Chinese for dinner.




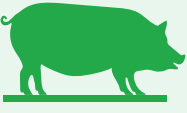


But, imagine your train gets delayed, or you get stuck in a meeting, so you get home a little later than you anticipated. You can't be bothered doing the shopping, so you turn back to your old friend the takeaway menu.

If you want to save yourself the guilt, there's another way. All you have to do is make sure your pantry is stocked with the essentials below, and you'll always have something on hand for a healthy and tasty meal.

Type	Examples	Benefits
Lentils & Pulses	Chickpeas, kidney beans, lentils, fava beans	Cheap, versatile and low-fat source of protein
Grains	Rice, pasta, tinned corn, couscous, quinoa, noodles	Great base for meals, go wholegrain to maximise fibre and other health benefits
Vegetables & Fruits	Tinned tomato, coconut milk, dried fruits, tinned fruit, potatoes, pumpkin, onion, garlic	Perfect for homemade pasta and curry sauces, dried and tinned fruits are a healthy snack
Fish	Sardines, tuna	High in protein and Omega-3, tinned oily fish is perfect on toast or in rich pasta
Spices	Chilli flakes, oregano, basil, thyme, turmeric, rosemary	Turn the ordinary into the extraordinary with a well-stocked spice rack
Sauces, oils & different kinds of vinegar	Olive oil, coconut oil, soy sauce, oyster sauce, white wine vinegar, balsamic vinegar, rice wine vinegar	If you have these items in your cupboard, you can create a multitude of healthy sauces, dressings and marinades

# PROTEIN

Meat is easy to cook, but hard to cook well. Each type of meat has its own specific needs and you need to be a master of juggling time and temperature if you want to cook the perfectly grilled steak, an expertly roasted chicken or a juicy pan fried piece of pork.

MEAT	ROASTING TIME (for 1KG of Meat)	BBQ/GRILL TIME (1 fillet)	TIPS
 <b>CHICKEN</b>	1 - 1.10 hour at 200°C/180°C fan/400°F/gas 6	9-10 minutes on high (BBQ) or med-high (pan), flip the chicken halfway through cooking	Massage oil, as well as any herbs and spices into the chicken before roasting or grilling, that way you get the juiciest, tastiest chicken on each bite
 <b>BEEF</b>	Medium-Rare: 40 minutes at 240°C/220°C fan/520°F/gas 9 and then a further 40 minutes at 180°C/160°C fan/350°F/gas 4 Medium: 50 minutes at 240°C/220°C fan/520°F/gas 9 and then a further 40 minutes at 180°C/160°C fan/350°F/gas 4"	Rare: 2-3 minutes each side on Med-High Medium: 4 minutes each side on Med-High Well-Done: 5-6 minutes each side on Med-High	To test if your steak or roast beef is ready or not, just push down on the beef. If it's soft and springy, it's rare and if it's tough, it's well-done.
 <b>LAMB</b>	For lamb leg: Medium: 50 minutes at 180°C/160°C fan/350°F/gas 4 plus 25 minutes at a slightly reduced temperature Well-Done: 60 minutes at 180°C/160°C fan/350°F/gas 4 plus 30 minutes at a slightly reduced temperature	Cook for 5 minutes on each side on med-high heat	Mint sauce is the perfect accompaniment to lamb, make your own to avoid the sugar and preservatives you'll find in store-bought varieties
 <b>PORK</b>	For pork loin: Roast for 80 minutes at 200°C/180°C fan/400°F/gas 6 until there is no pink meat and juice runs clear	Cook for 5-7 minutes each side on med-high heat	Homemade applesauce gives you a hit of Vitamin C and fibre to make your pork even healthier and tastier
 <b>TURKEY</b>	For whole turkey: Heat oven to 180°C/160°C fan/350°F/gas 4 and roast for 35-40 minutes or until juices run clear when piercing the thickest part of the leg	Cook for 8-10 each side over medium heat	Rubbing salt under the skin of turkey is a process known as 'dry brining' and it helps to keep roast turkey and even grilled turkey moist
 <b>FISH</b>	For white fish or salmon fillets: Place fish fillets on a greased or lined baking tray and roast at 230°C/210°C fan/450°F for 10 minutes per inch of thickness	Cook for 4-6 minutes per side over medium to medium-high heat.	Thicker cuts of fish such as tuna, swordfish and salmon grill more successfully than leaner fish. Thinner cuts of fish may require a grill basket.

# GRAINS

## PASTA

There's a thin spaghetti strap between el dente and over cooked. Cooking times for pasta depend on the size and thickness, see below for the perfect cook time for each each type.

1. Make sure your pot has enough water. You should have at least 500ml of water for 100g of pasta. (a little more won't hurt!)
2. Salt your water (more than you want to). A full tsp of salt will do the trick.
3. Bring your water to a boil, before adding your pasta.
4. Add pasta to the pot and cook for:  
Longer pasta (spaghetti, linguine, tagliatelle) 8-10 minutes  
Shorter pasta (penne, bows, shells) 10-12 minutes  
Ravioli: 3-5 minutes or when most of the pasta has risen to the top of the pot  
Gnocchi: 2-4 minutes or as soon as you can see the gnocchi float to the top

## RICE

Assuming you don't have a nifty rice cooker and aren't a fan of the ready-to go microwave rice packs. This is the best way to cook light and fluffy rice.

### White:

1. Always rinse your rice. I know you can't be bothered but rinsing rice removes excess starch that causes it to clump together.
2. Boil your water before adding your rice. Nearly all types of rice follow the 2:1 ratio. 2 cups of water per 1 cup of rice. You can scale up and down as much as you need following the same rule.
3. Give your rice a quick stir once in the pot and add a little salt.
4. The water will stop boiling when you add the rice, so you'll need to get it back up to a simmer before popping the lid on.
5. Reduce the heat to low and leave the lid on, allowing a nice amount of steam to form.
6. After 17-19 minutes of cooking your rice should be done. Have a little taste test and if it's ready, pop the lid back on and let it sit for a couple of minutes.
7. Finally, fluff the rice up with a fork and serve!

### Brown:

For brown rice, you can follow the exact same steps, except for the cooking and standing time. Brown rice takes longer to cook because it's a whole grain, meaning it contains the bran, endosperm and germ. You'll need to leave it on the stove top for 40-45 minutes and then let it stand for 10 before serving.

## QUINOA

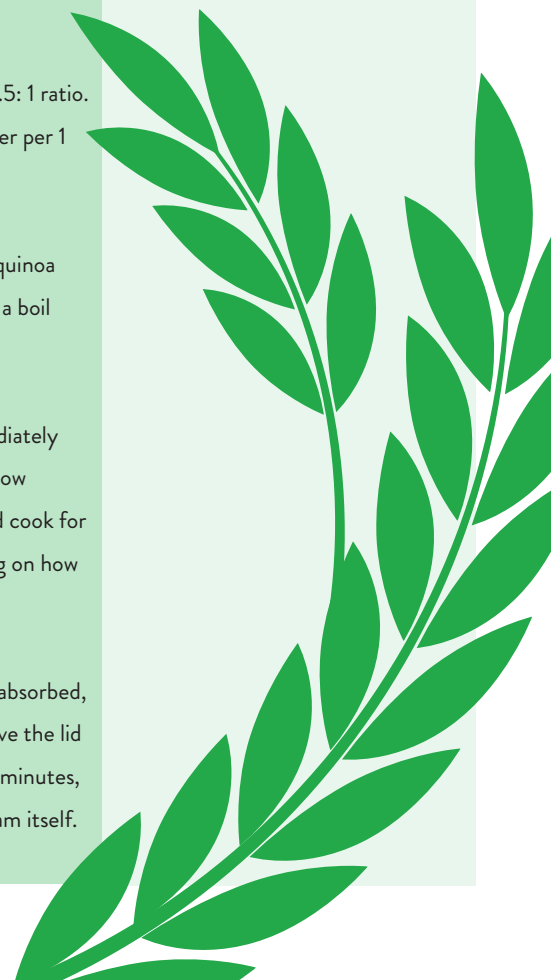
Quinoa: hard to pronounce (keen-wah) but easy to cook!

1. Quinoa is another grain that tastes and cooks better after a quick rinse. Pop it in a strainer and run cold water over the grain while gently rubbing it to remove saponins (insecticides that accumulate on quinoa and can cause it to taste a little bitter).
2. Quinoa follows the 1.5: 1 ratio. You'll need 1.5 cups of water per 1 cup of quinoa.
3. Add cold water and quinoa to your pot and bring it to a boil together.
4. Once boiling, immediately reduce the heat to a very low simmer. Pop the lid on and cook for 10-20 minutes (depending on how much you're cooking).
5. Once the water has absorbed, remove from the heat, leave the lid on and let it stand for five minutes, allowing the quinoa to steam itself.

## COUS COUS

Cooking couscous? Easy peasy! This little grain is the easiest of all to cook.

1. Couscous follows the 1.5:1 ratio. You'll need 1.5 cups of water per 1 cup of couscous.
2. Bring water and a little bit of salt to boil, once boiling, turn the heat off.
3. Stir couscous in straight away, pop the lid on and leave for 5-10 minutes.
4. Once the water has fully absorbed, fluff with a fork.



# POTATOES

## ROAST

The trick to cooking a fluffy on the inside, crispy on the outside potato is to par boil them first.

Here's how it can be done:

1. Preheat oven to 180°C. Line a baking tray with baking paper and set aside.
2. Peel potatoes and cut them into 5cm chunks. Place them in a large saucepan and cover with water.
3. Bring to a boil, then immediately reduce to a medium heat. Allow potatoes to cook for 5-10 minutes. (note: they don't need to fully cook, just soften).
4. Drain the potatoes in a colander, making sure you get all excess water off. Transfer potatoes to a bowl and give them a really good shake, this softens them a little further and gives them a nice rough shape.
5. Transfer potatoes to a bowl, add olive oil, salt & pepper and gently toss to coat.
6. Place potatoes on the baking tray (don't overcrowd the tray as it will affect the crispiness) and cook for 40-45 minutes or until potatoes are golden and crispy.
7. Transfer to some kitchen towel to absorb any excess oil.
8. Add a little extra salt before serving.

\* 1kg potatoes  
4 tbsp olive oil

## MASHED

Is there anything more comforting than creamy mashed potato? There are so many delicious variations you can make.

Follow the below method for simple creamy mash but feel free to add any additions you like.

1. Start by peeling your potatoes and chopping them into quarters.
2. Place in a large pot and cover with cold water. Add a little salt and bring the water to a boil. Once boiling, reduce heat and allow to simmer for 15-20 minutes. You'll know your potatoes are ready when you can pierce them with a fork.
3. Drain potatoes, add butter, milk, salt & cracked pepper and get mashing. A potato masher will make your job easier and works best.

\*1 kg potatoes  
1 tsp salt  
125ml hot milk  
75g unsalted butter  
(room temp and slightly softened)

## CHIPS

Chips will always be a 'sometimes' food, but when you make them yourself you can have them that little bit more often. Who wouldn't want that?

There are stacks of ways you can cook chips, but the below method is for quick and easy, chunky oven roast chips.

1. Heat oven to 250°C. Line a baking tray with baking paper and set aside.
2. Cut the potatoes into 1cm slices, then cut them into 1cm thick sticks.
3. Pop potatoes in a large saucepan, cover with water and bring to a boil. Once boiling reduce heat to medium and simmer potatoes for 3 minutes.
4. Drain, transfer to a large bowl, add olive oil, salt & pepper and gently toss to coat.
5. Transfer potatoes to the baking tray (make sure the chips aren't touching. Use two trays if you need).
6. Cook for 15-20 minutes (flipping halfway) or until chips are golden and crispy.



# DRESSINGS

Store bought salad dressings are often packed with salt, sugar, saturated fat and preservatives. Adding a dash of your favourite dressing to your healthy salad can throw out your macros and significantly add to your daily calorie intake. For example, 2 tbsps of a store-bought ranch dressing averages around 130 calories.

When you make your own salad dressing, not only can you guarantee it will be fresh, healthy and preservative free, but it's also cheaper.

Below is a list of common salad dressing ingredients. Simply pick and choose ingredients from each column, and don't be afraid to get creative!

## OILS

- Olive oil
- Sesame oil
- Avocado oil
- Flaxseed oil
- Peanut oil
- Walnut oil

## VINEGARS

- Rice wine vinegar
- White wine vinegar
- Champagne vinegar
- Apple cider vinegar
- Red wine vinegar
- Balsamic vinegar
- Sherry vinegar

## HEALTHY FATS

- Tahini
- Peanut butter
- Natural yoghurt
- Greek yoghurt
- Avocado (blended)

## EXTRAS

- Dijon mustard
- Wholegrain mustard
- Garlic
- Onion (minced)
- Ginger
- Miso Paste
- Mayonnaise
- Honey
- Chilli
- Wholegrain mustard
- Anchovies
- Soy Sauce
- Lemon juice
- Lime juice
- Sea salt & cracked pepper

## HERBS

- Coriander
- Parsely
- Dill
- Mint
- Basil
- Chives

## SALAD DRESSING COMBINATION IDEAS:

### Honey Mustard

- 4 tbsp olive oil
- 2 tbsp lemon juice
- 2 tsp wholegrain mustard
- 2 tsp honey

### Caesar

- 4 tbsp Greek yoghurt
- 1 tsp Dijon mustard
- 2 anchovies (minced)
- 2 tsp lemon juice

### Thai Peanut

- 4 tbsp peanut butter
- 1 1/2 tbsp lime juice
- 1 1/2 tbsp rice vinegar
- 1 1/2 tbsp soy sauce
- 1 tsp ginger (minced)
- 2 tbsp water

### Vinaigrette

- 4 tbsp olive oil
- 2 tbsp white wine vinegar
- Salt & cracked pepper



# EGGS

## BOILED

Whether you're a runny, squidgy or hard yolk lover, follow the steps below to cook your perfect boiled egg.

**1.** Place your eggs in a pot and cover them with cold water. The water should be about 1 inch higher than the eggs.

**2.** Bring the water to a boil. Once your water is boiling, turn it down to a simmer and set a timer with your desired cooking time.

The below times indicate how long you'll need to cook your eggs for:

- **2 minutes:** Your egg white will still be runny and your yolk will be very runny.

**From 4 minutes onwards,** you'll have a fully set egg white. But your yolk will look like this:

- **3 minutes** – A very runny yolk

- **4 minutes** – Yolk is set around the edges, but still a little runny in the middle

- **5 minutes** – Your yolk is set but still squidgy

- **8 minutes** – A fully set yolk that's a little crumbly

**Tip:** Pop your eggs in a bowl of cold or ice water straight after you take them out of the pot to stop them from continuing to cook.

## POACHED

Poaching is arguably the trickiest method of cooking an egg. But if you follow these seven specific, but simple steps, we guarantee you'll have a poached egg to be proud of.

**1.** Cracking the egg straight into the pan is too rough. Instead, crack your egg into a small bowl so you can gently slide it in.

**2.** You'll need at least 6cms of water in your pan. Make sure the water isn't bubbling like crazy, as it will break your egg. Just a few little bubbles rising to the top is a good sign your water is good to go.

**3.** Add a dash of vinegar.

**4.** Stir the water gently to create a little whirlpool

**5.** Slide your egg into the centre of the pan

**6.** Cook for about 3.5-4 minutes, or until you can see the white has set

**7.** Use a slotted spoon to remove your egg from the pan and transfer to a plate

### THE BEST WAY TO PEEL A BOILED EGG?

There's nothing more satisfying than peeling a perfectly smooth egg. Here's the fool proof method:

**1.** Roll your egg along the bench to crack the shell.

**2.** Peel off the cracked shell under running water. The water gets under the membrane and makes it easier to slide it off.

## FRIED

Knowing how to fry an egg is a serious life skill. A fried egg can be a great breakfast, lunch, dinner or snack. And maybe most importantly, the closest cure to a hangover that currently exists.

Here's how it's done:

**1.** Choose your frying fat/oil  
We think extra virgin olive oil is a fantastic choice. It can handle higher heats and adds a subtle deliciousness to the eggs.

### 2. FRY YOUR EGGS

Get your pan very hot and crack your egg/s towards the centre. Once you see the edges of the egg begin to turn white, pop a lid on the pan.

- **Runny Yolk: 4 minutes**

- **Squidgy yolk: 5 minutes**

- **Hard yolk: 6 minutes**

## SCRAMBLED

You can make some pretty whizz-bang scrambled eggs, but this is a guide to the simple style. Feel free to add any vegetables, herbs or spices you fancy.

**1.** Get cracking  
Crack your eggs into a bowl, add milk, salt & pepper (if you desire) and beat until combined.

**2.** Choose your frying fat/oil  
For scrambled eggs, we think butter works best.

**3.** Scramble your eggs  
Bring your pan to medium-high heat and add butter. Once butter is forming, pour in your eggs. Let the mixture sit for about 40-60 seconds before beginning to gently push the outside of the egg mixture into the middle. Continue until there's no liquid. Remove your eggs when they look to be just slightly underdone, as they'll continue to cook.

### Scrambled Eggs for Two

4 eggs

1/2 cup milk

Salt & pepper



# VEGETABLES

Vegetable	Roasting Time	Notes	Steaming Time	Notes
<b>Aubergine</b>	20 - 40	Halves - cut side down: 30 - 40. Slices - flip half way: 20 - 25	20 - 25	Steam covered. Cut into cubes.
<b>Asparagus</b>	10-15	Ends trimmed	5 - 6	Steam uncovered. Ends trimmed
<b>Bell Pepper</b>	23-30	Cut into halves	6 - 8	Steam covered. Halved or cut into chunks
<b>Beetroot</b>	20 - 60	20 - 30 minutes for slices, 1 hour for whole beets	20 - 25	Steam covered. Cut into quarters
<b>Broccoli</b>	20 - 25	Cut into florets	5 - 6	Steam covered. Cut into florets
<b>Broccolini</b>	15	Ends trimmed	5 - 6	Steam covered. Ends trimmed
<b>Brussels Sprouts</b>	20-25	halved	6 - 8	Steam covered. Large ones chopped in half
<b>Butternut Squash</b>	35-40	Cut into chunks	10 - 15	Steam covered. Cut into cubes
<b>Carrot</b>	20-25	Whole or cut into chunks	6 - 10	Steam covered. Whole or cut in pieces

All roasting times are for 220c/425f/Gas 7.  
Oil: Extra Virgin Olive Oil

# VEGETABLES



Vegetable	Roasting Time	Notes	Steaming Time	Notes
<b>Cauliflower</b>	30	Cut into florets	5 - 7	Steam covered. Cut into cubes.
<b>Celery</b>	25-30	Whole or cut into chunks	5 - 7	Steam covered. Ends trimmed
<b>Corn</b>	30-35	Wrapped in foil	10 -15	Steam covered. Halved or cut into chunks
<b>Courgette</b>	15-20	Cut into thick slices/chunks	5 - 7	Steam covered. Cut into quarters
<b>Green Beans</b>	15-20	Ends trimmed	5 - 7	Steam covered. Cut into florets
<b>Kale</b>	20	Massaged in Olive oil	5 - 10	Steam covered. Ends trimmed
<b>Mushrooms</b>	25-30	Whole or halved		
<b>Onions</b>	25-30	cut in wedges		
<b>Parsnip</b>	20-25	cut in chunks	12-15	Steam covered. Whole or cut in pieces

All roasting times are for  
220c/425F/Gas 7.  
Oil: Extra Virgin Olive Oil

# VEGETABLES



Vegetable	Roasting Time	Notes	Steaming Time	Notes
<b>Peas</b>			3-4	Steam covered
<b>Potato</b>	30 - 35	Cut into cubes/ chips/wedges	25 - 35	Steam covered. Whole small potatoes or larger ones cut in cubes
<b>Pumpkin</b>	40 - 45	Cut into cubes/ thick slices	10 -15	Steam covered. Cut into slices or cubes
<b>Sweet Potato</b>	30 - 35	Cut into cubes/ chips/wedges	25 - 35	Steam covered. Cut into cubes
<b>Spinach</b>			2 - 3	Steam covered
<b>Turnip</b>	35 - 45	cut in chunks	15 - 20	Steam covered

All roasting times are for 220c/425f/Gas 7.  
Oil: Extra Virgin Olive Oil



There you go, you've gone from basic to boss in just one book. You've mastered the fundamentals of cooking and now you can cook whatever you like.

You'll still want to go out for dinner, and yes, you'll still need Uber Eats and Deliveroo on your phone. But, you won't need to call on these options as much. You can cook for yourself, as well as your family and friends and we guarantee you'll save money, your health goals will be more easily achievable and you'll love your time spent in the kitchen.

Now that you're a boss cook, it's up to you to spread the word. Cooking is easy, and everyone deserves to be let in on the secret of the power of a home cooked meal.



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