

# SELF

## 8 Healthy Cooking Secrets I Learned from the CIA Self

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So you've already read about the awesome time I had at the Healthy Kitchens, Healthy Lives conference that I went to at the Culinary Institute of America (CIA) in California last week. The conference was co-sponsored by the Harvard School of Public Health and the CIA, so needless to say I learned a lot. One of my favorite things that I got to do while I was there was attend hands-on workshops in the kitchen and learn from CIA chefs, so I thought I would share eight culinary secrets...



...that I learned while I was there.

1. To stop avocados from browning, take them out of the peel, cut as desired, and then plunge them into an ice bath (a bowl of ice water) for a couple minutes. Of course you can use citrus juice to prevent browning as well, but this ice bath method is great for recipes that don't call for citrus.
2. To prevent a stringy tomato sauce (or anything else that you are making with fresh tomatoes), peel them. Do this by using a knife to cut an "x" into the bottom of the tomatoes, then drop them into boiling water for a few seconds and then use a slotted spoon to remove them and immediately plunge them into an ice bath for a few seconds. This will loosen the skin and you should be able to pull it right off with your hands as soon as you remove them from the ice bath.
3. Use tamarind to add a distinctively sour-savory flavor to Indian cuisine or Asian-inspired dishes like hot-and-sour soup. You can use it like you would lemon juice, but it's tastier! Tamarind is the fruit of a tall tree that grows in Asia and North Africa. Its pods are about five inches long and contain seeds and a pulp that become extremely sour when dried. Tamarind pulp concentrate is widely used in Indian and Middle Eastern cooking. Find tamarind paste or powder in the ethnic section of your grocery store or online.

4. Almost any fruit can be turned into a salsa. Just dice it and combine with a little citrus juice, diced jalapeno pepper, onion and salt or any other spices you like.
5. Anytime you add citrus fruit to a recipe, make sure to remove the pith (the white membrane under the peel), as it will make your dish taste bitter.
6. To add more flavor to your guacamole toast cumin by placing whole cumin seeds in a dry skillet over medium-high heat. Shake the skillet occasionally to move the seeds around until they become a toasted brown color and start to smoke, about 4-5 minutes. Remove from heat and let the seeds cool then grind them in a spice grinder or coffee mill until it becomes a fine powder. Add a 1/2 tsp. per avocado.
7. To prevent salads from getting too soggy or watery, remove the seeds from cucumbers and tomatoes as you slice them. This especially helpful if you are not serving the salad right away!
8. To add a kick of sweetness to savory dishes, make a pomegranate molasses by boiling pomegranate juice until it thickens and easily coats the back of a spoon. It's yummy on top of meats and savory veggies and is great to use in marinades or salad dressings.

What great cooking tips have you learned recently?