

A whole, bright yellow lemon is centered on a light-colored wooden cutting board. The lemon has a small stem at the bottom left. The text is overlaid on the lemon and the board.

The Exham on Sea Kitchen Cheat Sheet

Libby Forest, the amateur investigator of the Exham on Sea Mysteries, doesn't spend much time with her feet up. If she isn't hot on the trail of villains, she's busy in the kitchen, seeking out ways to make cooking easier and quicker. Here are some favourite tips and tricks, ranging from the best way to peel an orange, to an easy way to peel garlic...



How to peel an orange

Peeling an orange can be a messy business, with juice squirting everywhere and sticky peel under your nails. Use this clever method from tablespoon.com to make life easier and less splashy...

Lay the orange on a chopping board.

Slice a thin section from the top and bottom.

Cut halfway into the orange vertically, from top to bottom.

Open out the orange, like a book.

Salads

Salads are wonderful. They're colourful and good for you, but they can take a while to prepare. Try these tips to speed up the process.

Here's the best recipe for an easy vinaigrette, with no messy whisking.

Measure out eight tablespoons olive oil, two tablespoons white wine vinegar, one teaspoon salt and one teaspoon smooth mustard. Place all the ingredients in a jar, screw on the lid and shake the jar vigorously. The dressing will keep in the jar with the lid in place, for at least a week.

Dry your salad leaves thoroughly and only add the dressing at the last moment. The vinaigrette clings far better to dry leaves, but even the crispest salad will become soggy after an hour or so.

Chopping herbs is a fiddly business. Instead of using a knife, put your basil, coriander or rosemary sprigs in a cup and snip them with scissors.

Need lemon juice for your recipe? Try this method to get the most juice out of each fruit.

Prepare the lemon by rolling it firmly on a chopping board or other hard surface to break down the cell membranes inside the fruit.

Cut the lemon in half and prick the cut surface a few times with a fork, to break down the cells and get the juices flowing fast.

Squeeze the lemon through a sieve, which will catch the pips and pith, into a bowl.

This works equally well with oranges and limes.



How to slice cherry tomatoes

If you need to slice cherry tomatoes, use this tip from thekitchn.com

Choose two plates, the same size as each other, and a sharp knife.

Lay your tomatoes in a single layer on one plate.

Turn the second plate upside down, on top of the cherries.

Rest a hand on the top plate, keeping your fingers away from the sides.

With the knife in your other hand, slice between the plates, to cut through all the tomatoes at once.

What could be easier? Apart from leaving them whole...

How to restore solid honey

Over time, your honey may crystallise into a solid mass in the jar, but that's no reason to waste it. Honey will last for years, so never throw it away.

All you need to do is warm it gently, either by placing the jar in a bowl of hot water, or zapping it in the microwave for 30 seconds.

How to keep the carving dish steady

Tired of carving meat on a dish that slithers around the work surface? Here's the solution:

Spread a damp tea towel under the carving dish. Try the same trick if your chopping board tends to slip.

How to open a stuck jar

Tried everything to open a jar, and still can't move the lid?

Run the lid under a hot tap for a few seconds. Lift it out and use a tea towel to grip the lid. This method nearly always works because the metal lid expands in the water heat, but the glass jar remains the same size.

How to peel a banana

It's obvious how to peel a banana - isn't it? You tug on the stem. But that can be pretty difficult, especially if you like your bananas slightly unripe. Monkeys, however, have a better way of managing the task, according to the dailymail.co.uk. Try this.

Ignore the end with the stem.

Instead, pinch the other end between the fingers of one hand.

The banana will split open with ease.

Bananas often ripen too fast. Keep them attached to each other while they're stored, preferably in a cupboard away from the light. They'll keep firm for longer.

Don't, by the way, keep them in the fruit bowl. They give off ethylene gas that causes the other fruit to over-ripen.

On the other hand, if you need to get a pear or a peach to ripen quickly, put it into a paper bag overnight with a banana. Fasten the top of the bag to trap the gas, and your fruit will ripen more quickly.



How to grate ginger

Keep fresh ginger in the freezer, ready to grate for use.

Peel it more easily by scraping a teaspoon down the side.

How to stop fish sticking

Does your fish stick to the grill pan? Does the coating come off your fish fingers when you heat them in the oven? This solution, from lifehacker.com, is one of the best.

Slice a lemon and place the slices on the pan.

Lay the fish, or fish fingers, on top of the slices.

Cook as normal.

You'll cure the sticky fish problem and the pan will be far easier to clean. As a bonus, the lemon will add flavour to the fish.

How to keep your veg crisp

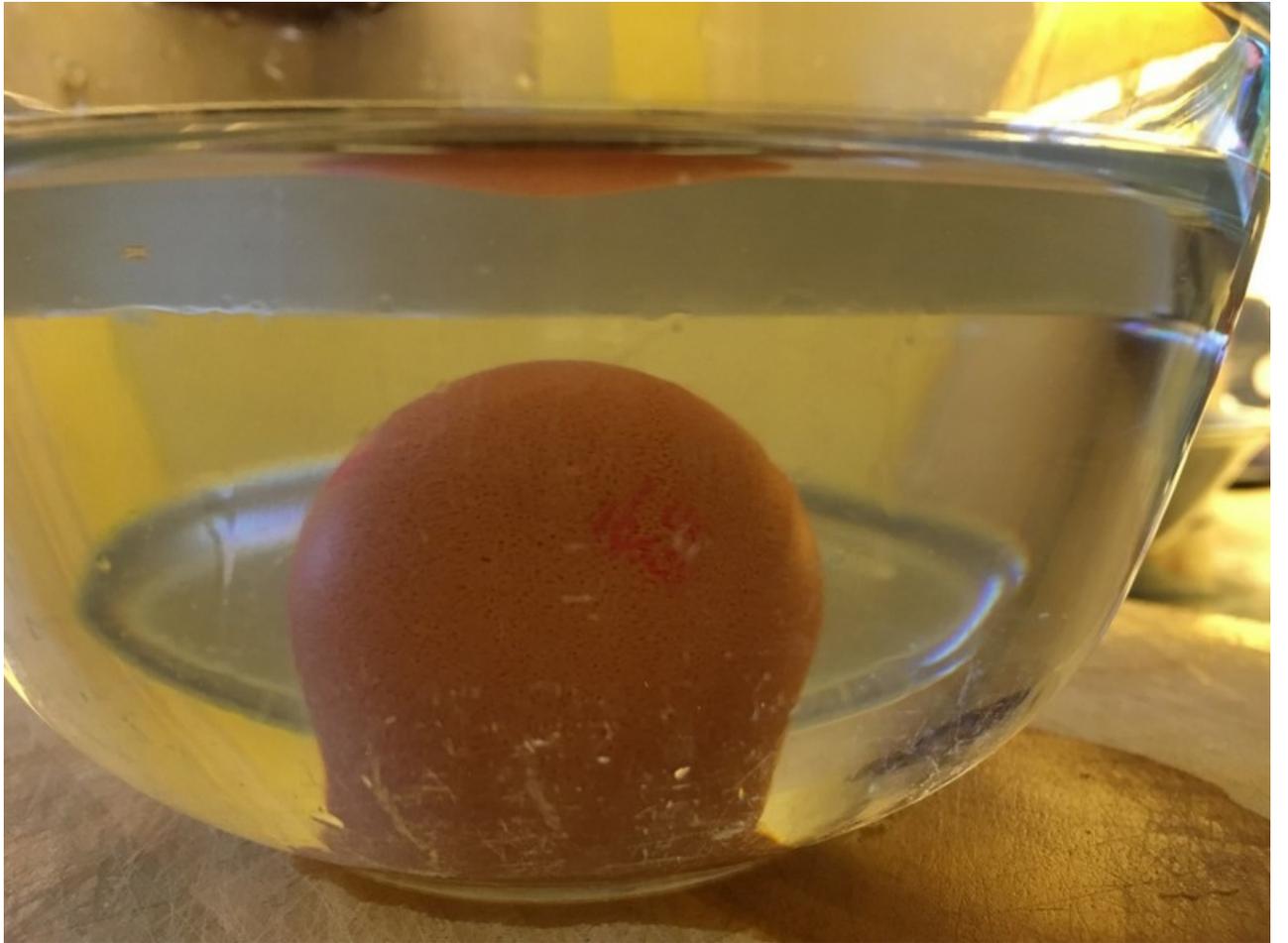
Line the vegetable drawers of your refrigerator with paper towels. The towels will absorb moisture and keep the veggies fresh for longer. No more soggy lettuce.

How to find out if an egg is fresh

Drop the egg gently into a bowl of cold water.

A fresh egg will fall to the bottom of the bowl, and stay there.

An egg that floats is too old to use.



How to slice pizza

Forget those fiddly pizza wheels that don't work. Instead, use scissors to cut your pizza into slices.

What to keep out of the fridge

The refrigerator's perfect for storing so many items of food, especially meat and fish that will deteriorate quickly at room temperature. Some food, though, is better kept outside the fridge. Keep the following at room temperature, because...

Bananas turn black in the cold.

Bread quickly gets stale. Put it in the freezer, instead.

Tomatoes become soggy.

Basil lasts longer stored like cut flowers, in water at room temperature, for a few days, or

frozen, chopped into olive oil, in ice cube trays.

Coffee loses its aroma and taste in the fridge.

Honey hardens.

How to remove excess fat from soup or stews

Ice cubes will quickly skim fat from the surface of hot food.

To avoid burning your fingers, put a few in a slotted spoon and whiz them around your finished soup or stew.

Don't let the fat anywhere near the sink. Pour it into an old yoghurt pot, then throw the pot out.

How to slice cake into layers

Ever tried to slice a sponge cake into horizontal layers and ended up with uneven layers? Here's the trick, from instructables.com...

Position tooth floss (unflavoured) against the side of the cake and pull it slowly through the sponge.

The same trick also works when you want to slice rolls of dough into separate biscuits.

How to make perfect pastry

To make truly short, yummy pastry, especially for jam tarts and mince pies, use half the weight of butter or margarine to flour. Grate block butter or margarine from the fridge straight into the flour. This keeps it cold and the smaller shards are easier to rub into the dry ingredients.

When you've rubbed the fat into the flour into breadcrumb texture, or zapped it in the food processor, add cold water slowly and mix until the dough feels damp and soft to the touch,

but not sticky. The ball of dough should leave the side of the bowl clean.

Gather your dough, knead it very lightly and wrap it in cling film or a plastic bag. Then, leave it in the fridge for at least 45 minutes to chill. The rest relaxes the dough, and makes it easier to roll and cut, producing a lighter pastry.

How to peel garlic

This is one of those messy jobs that leaves your fingers smelling terrible for days. Here's a wonderful way to peel a whole head of garlic in one fell swoop and keep your hands clean at the same time.

You need two bowls. Use bowls of equal size, or one that fits comfortably into the other.

Place the garlic in the larger bowl, invert the smaller bowl over the top, and shake like mad.

The cloves will split from each other, and most of the papery skins will fall away.

Glass bowls work, but metal ones are even better, and don't break if you shake too hard and one flies across the room.

Clean any remaining garlic smell from your hands by rubbing them on stainless steel, or even on your chrome taps.



More Cheats

Thank you for reading. I hope you've found something useful here.

Maybe you have a kitchen cheat of your own that you'd like to share. If so, I'd love to hear it. Email me at <mailto:fevesham@btinternet.com>