

5 Things Cooking Has Taught Me About Life

BY VIRGINIA WILLIS

1 Faith Faith is as simple as believing that if you mix that flour, sugar and butter together with a few other things you will have a delicious dessert. Faith is expecting that if proper technique is followed and good ingredients are used, that the result will be tasty. I wear a bracelet that reads “When You Have Faith Anything Is Possible.” A business colleague saw it once and commented, “I didn’t know you were so religious.” It’s not really just about that kind of faith. Faith is believing in many things, including yourself and your ability.

2 Seasoning As a cooking teacher I caution my students to “season as they go.” In cooking if all the salt is added at the beginning of cooking it will not taste right, and if it is all added at the end it will be equally incorrect. Seasoning food is a constant process and the most important is to season before serving. Every now and then we need to assess and make adjustments.

3 Laissez Faire Sometimes cooking is as much about knowing when to stir the pot as to not. Try to flip that fish filet before it’s ready and it will simply tear. Simply leaving something alone to cook will allow it to develop and grow, while worrying over it and stirring too much will not allow for searing or even perhaps turn things to mush. Leave it be. Pay attention, but let it be.

4 Patience Anyone who has burned his or her mouth tasting something before it cools enough knows the importance of patience. Remove a steak from the grill and cut into it before it has rested? The juices run all over the board and the steak is dry and tough. Even direr is to cut a cake or a loaf of bread before it cools sufficiently and it crumbles. Open the door too often to check on cooking and it just ceases to cook because all the heat has escaped. Patience is a key ingredient.

5 Dedication Something that makes me madder than anything is when I burn something. It’s absolutely the most stupid idiotic thing to do in the kitchen and it’s usually a result of not being dedicated, by not paying attention. Being dedicated means doing something the right way and following through. The truth is sometimes it is incredibly tempting to not be dedicated and to take a short cut, but in reality it’s much easier to do things right to begin with rather than try to fix a mistake. Great ingredients aren’t enough. Making a great base to a dish is not enough. Cooking a dish until it’s just right is not enough. It takes all these things; it takes real dedication.

