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KITCHEN LORE: BIGGEST CULINARY MYTHS REVEALED

Posted on [September 20, 2012](#) by [Stephen Stromberg](#)



So true — or so false?

Over the years, various superstitions and myths have been passed along from kitchen to kitchen. Because cooking can be very tricky, we often rely on these so-called "myths" to help us with our culinary challenges. While many cooks swear by these so-called myths, there are others of us who are willing to bet at least half of them are a bunch of bologna!

As head chef at [Sapporo](#), it's my job to clear up any culinary misinformation, to tell the truth and sort the fact from the fiction in the kitchen.

So, here are some of the biggest kitchen lore — revealed!



Food cooks faster in salted boiling water.

So true – sort of. Let's break it down. Salt does one main thing: flavors food. What it doesn't do is make water boil quicker. In fact, when added to water, it actually raises the boiling temperature of the water making it take longer to boil. However, because it makes the water hotter, it will make food cook faster.



Storing coffee in the freezer helps it stay fresh longer.

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So false. Whether its a Starbucks brand or whatever your grocery store has on sale, keeping coffee in the freezer is a no-no. Why, you ask? The truth behind this myth is that coffee beans are porous, which means they will soak up any smells that are in your fridge or freezer. The best bet to only buy small amounts at a time and to keep coffee fresh by storing it in a cool, dark, dry place.

3 Don't eat shellfish such as clams, oysters, or mussels that haven't opened during cooking.

So true. At Sapporo, we use various types of shellfish in our recipes and one myth we know the truth about. When a closed shell has not opened, it can mean one of a few things. Either it hasn't received adequate heat, in which it should be discarded; or it may have been bad to start with, so it should be discarded. Shellfish typically will open after 10 minutes of steaming or boiling. Do not ever serve raw or rotten shellfish as it can cause illness or food-poisoning.

4 All alcohol burns off when you cook with wine or spirits.

So false. While there may be booze in your grandma's rum cake, you certainly aren't going to get drunk from it. When cooking with alcohol, different amounts of alcohol may remain in the dish, depending on what is being made. Baking a cake is different from making pasta sauce. If you plan on cooking for hours and hours, then you might cook off all the alcohol. When simmering, typically only up to 50 percent of the alcohol will still be in the food.

5 If you put an avocado pit in your guacamole, it will keep it from turning brown.

So false – sort of. Avocado turns brown when it gains access to air, resulting in oxidation. While many may leave the pit in their guacamole hoping it will keep it from turning brown, this, in fact, will only block a part of the exposed avocado from the air. Use citric acid, which acts as an antioxidant, or plastic wrap to keep from turning brown.

6 Rinse pieces of chicken or whole chicken before cooking.

So false. There is NO need to give your chicken a bath before using it to cook. In fact, when you wash any part of a chicken in the sink, the germs from the chicken can contaminate the sink. Any items that may be in the sink or may be around can then pass germs. Avoid this. All bacteria is killed during the cooking process.

7 Use oil when cooking pasta to help pasta from sticking.

So false. Never put oil in water. While many think it will help keeping pasta from sticking it doesn't. When adding oil to water, it will naturally float at the top. It will also keep sauce from sticking to pasta. Instead, try periodically stirring pasta noodles to keep from sticking.

8 When you burn yourself, ice will make it worse.

So true! Even the best cooks in the world are guilty of getting a burn or two. Sure, the first reaction may to grab some ice; however, ice will actually make the burn worse (freezer burn). Instead, run the burn under cool water, and apply antibiotic ointment and a Band-Aid to help heal.

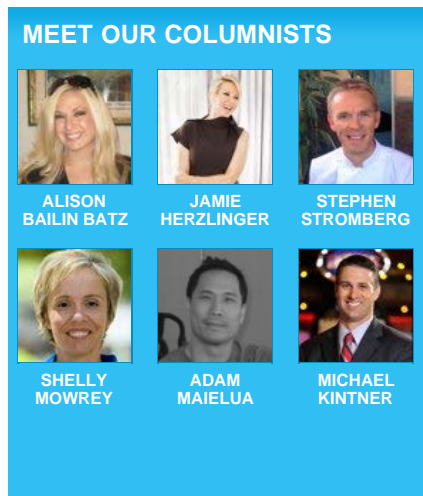


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ABOUT STEPHEN STROMBERG

With nearly 20 years in the food and beverage industry (the past 14 being in Arizona), chef Stromberg has worked his way up the restaurant ranks — from dishwasher, to waiter, to executive chef and everything in between. As executive chef of Sapporo, his day-to-day activities include overseeing all aspects of food preparation and execution, along with morning prep, lunch and dinner service, ordering, inventory and table-side chats with guests.

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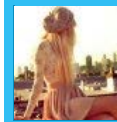
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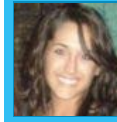
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