

Basic Tips for Sous Vide Cooking

You've heard the saying "don't try this at home," but when you're talking about sous vide cooking, that advice does not apply. Sous vide can be done at home, with the proper equipment and instructions... but there are some areas of concern and caution.

Here's some background. Sous vide (pronounced "sue-veed") is not a new process, it has been around for several decades in Europe. The term "sous vide" is French for "under vacuum." It is a method of cooking in which food is placed in a plastic pouch and vacuum-sealed. The pouch is then placed in a water bath for slow cooking at low temperatures. Some foods are served directly from the bag/water bath while others are finished with a quick sear.

Here are some sous vide cooking tips!

1. Start with fresh, high-quality ingredients.
2. Keep the food cold until you're ready to pack it into the sous vide bags.
3. Keep raw and cooked foods separate to avoid cross-contamination.
4. Wash your work area and your hands before starting.
5. Use recognized and tested sous vide equipment from known manufacturers.
6. Make sure that the instructions in the company's manual or recipe book feature research-based procedures, cooking times, and temperatures.
7. This is not the time to experiment or be creative with time and temperatures. The proper time and temperature combinations are essential for safe sous vide cooking. Follow the research-tested recipes precisely.



8. If you don't have a vacuum machine to take the air out of your bags, use water displacement — don't suck the air out with a straw.
9. If you're not serving your sous vide food immediately, properly cool it and keep it refrigerated or freeze it until you're ready to serve it.
10. Make sure that you're using food-safe and heat-resistant bags for sous vide cooking. Not all zip-top bags are designed to be exposed to heat for an extended period of time.
11. While do-it-yourself sous vide cooking directions and recipes abound on the internet, many of these recipes are untested for food safety and may have been developed by a person with little or no food safety training. This is where the "don't try this at home" recommendation actually is true.

Proponents of sous vide cooking say that the lower temperatures used in the cooking process result in improved flavors and textures, while increasing moisture and tenderness. Following carefully-researched procedures is critical to safely achieving these results.

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