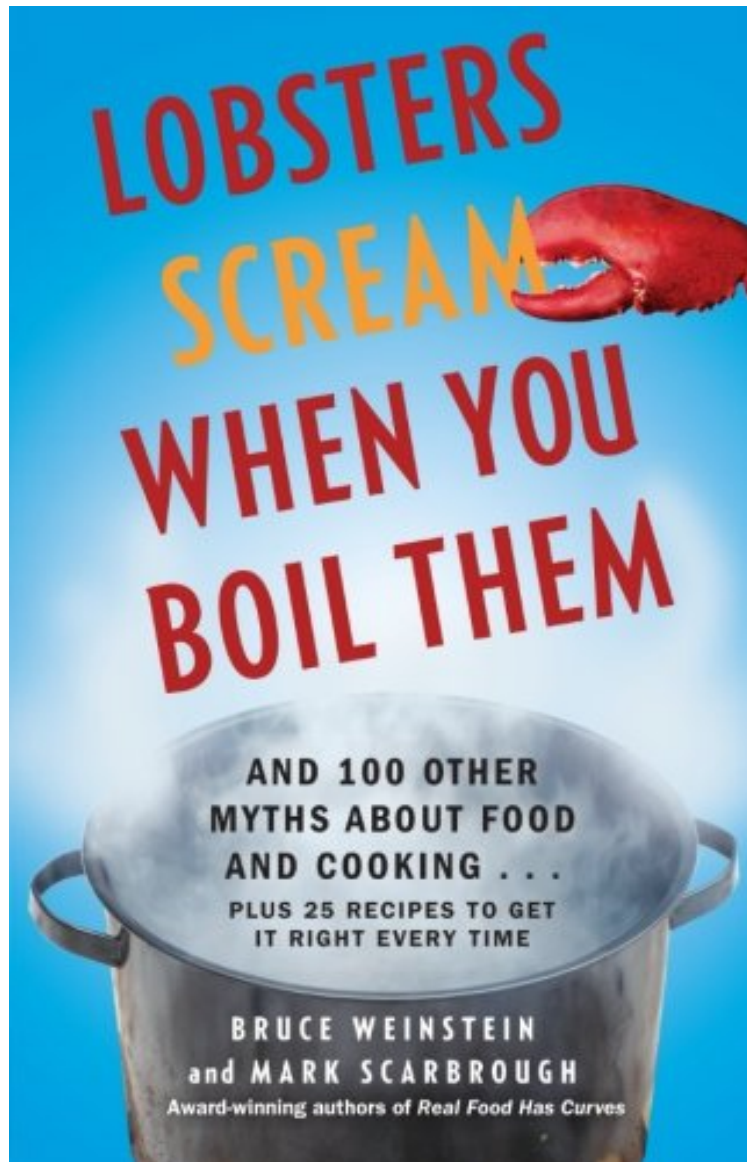


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## Lobsters Scream When You Boil Them: And 100 Other Myths About Food and Cooking . . . Plus 25 Recipes to Get It Right Every Time

*Bruce Weinstein, Mark Scarbrough*  
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**Bruce Weinstein, Mark Scarbrough : Lobsters Scream When You Boil Them: And 100 Other Myths About Food and Cooking . . . Plus 25 Recipes to Get It Right Every Time** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or

not it would be worth my time, and all praised Lobsters Scream When You Boil Them: And 100 Other Myths About Food and Cooking . . . Plus 25 Recipes to Get It Right Every Time:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Laughter Through Cooking, My Favorite EmotionBy Deborah MontgomeryI thought this book was hilarious and informative. It was a fun, easy read, and the title reminded me of that scene from Annie Hall when Diane Keaton and Woody Allen were having a lobster boil. But they had me after the first article that dispelled the myth on using room temperature butter when baking cookies. I KNEW it from my first batch of Tollhouse cookies in the 70's, but I'd never actually heard anybody say it was just wrong. And I'm embarrassed to admit that I have been keeping my decaf coffee beans in the freezer. Not anymore! I laughed out loud so much that I took it to the office, where it was "borrowed." Hopefully that person will bring it back sans food stains. I'm buying it for a couple of my friends who enjoy cooking as a Christmas gift, but it definitely qualifies as a coffee table humor book or a reference book. Two thumbs up!0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy Customergood book2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. YOU DON'T HAVE TO COOK TO ENJOY THIS ONE!By A Bird in the HandThis is a most amusing and fun book, full of great tidbits of truths and non truths in the food world and beyond. Interspersed between myths are some lovely recipes, but you certainly do not have to be a cook to enjoy this book.The writing is light and humorous, the writers witty and full of interesting food knowledge. I guess I never thought about where gelatin came from, but if you are wondering, and looking for many other fascinating food facts that will certainly keep conversation going for hours, this is a handy book. It is entertaining and will take your mind away from the worries of your day.

Is the five-second rule for real? Will eating carrots improve your eyesight? Is your cookware a health hazard? Do spicy foods cool you down? Has your grandmother been lying to you all these years? No, no, no, no, and . . . probably. In this entertaining and informative reference guide, award-winning cookbook authors Bruce Weinstein and Mark Scarbrough take on more than one hundred popular kitchen myths and dish up answers to all your burning questions about food science and lore. No longer must you wait for your butter to reach room temperature before you bake or panic because you forgot to soak your dried beans for dinner. This handy book explains how knowing the truth behind these urban legends can help you be a better chef in your own home and offers twenty-five delicious recipes so you can practice. Whether you're a serious foodie, an avid dieter, a trivia lover, or are just searching for the secret to the perfect cup of coffee, Lobsters Scream When You Boil Them is essential countertop reading and a whole lot of fun.

If you consider yourself a foodie, love to eat, or are a fan of Alton Brown's food-meets-science approach, you'll enjoy Lobsters Scream When You Boil Them. Kirkus "I consider myself pretty savvy when it comes to food myths or at least when it comes to debunking them which is why I figured out awhile ago that putting an avocado pit in guacamole does not keep it from turning brown. But a new book, Lobsters Scream When You Boil Them: And 100 Other Myths About Food and Cooking by Bruce Weinstein and Mark Scarbrough, helped me to understand why." --Lynn Andriani, Life Lift, The Oprah Blog "My first thought when I saw the title of Lobsters Scream When You Boil Them was please, spare me from another irreverent take on serious kitchen happenings. Relief came when I spotted the authors names. Team Bruce Weinstein (chef) and Mark Scarbrough (food writer) have collected culinary notches on their apron belts with a James Beard nomination for Ham: An Obsession with Hindquarters, as authors of the Ultimate series of cookbooks, and as contributors and columnists for food publications -- Cooking Light, Leite's Culinaria, and Weight Watchers." --Carol Blonder, The Phoenix New Times About the Author BRUCE WEINSTEIN and MARK SCARBROUGH are the authors of nineteen books about food, including Real Food Has Curves; the bestselling, multi-volume Ultimate Cook Book series; Ham: An Obsession with the Hindquarter; Goat: Meat, Milk, Cheese; and Cooking Know-How, winner of a 2009 Gourmand World Award. They are online columnists for Weight Watchers ("A Cut Above"), have been spokespeople for the U. S. Potato Board and the California Milk Advisory Board, and regularly contribute to Fine Cooking, Cooking Light, Eating Well, Relish, and The Washington Post. They live in Litchfield County, Connecticut. BRUCE WEINSTEIN and MARK SCARBROUGH are the authors of nineteen books about food, including Real Food Has Curves; the bestselling, multi-volume Ultimate Cook Book series; Ham: An Obsession with the Hindquarter; Goat: Meat, Milk, Cheese; and Cooking Know-How, winner of a 2009 Gourmand World Award. They are online columnists for Weight Watchers ("A Cut Above"), have been spokespeople for the U. S. Potato Board and the California Milk Advisory Board, and regularly contribute to Fine Cooking, Cooking Light, Eating Well, Relish, and The Washington Post. They live in Litchfield County, Connecticut. Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. Lobsters Scream When You Boil Them 1 BECAUSE WE'VE ALWAYS DONE IT THAT WAY The Ten Classics Repeat a lie enough and it starts to sound like the truth. Publish it enough and it starts to become the truth. After years of reading cookbooks and food articles, we've seen our share of unsubstantiated food mythology pass into the realm of received wisdom. We've done our best to set the record straight, but spreading the word at Q & A sessions after cooking demonstrations has felt a lot like lobbing pebbles at Cossacks. The following ten myths are the ones that we have identified as the most pervasive forms of erroneous common knowledge. Call these the culinary

equivalents of blondes have more fun. **FOR BAKING, THE BUTTER SHOULD BE AT ROOM TEMPERATURE. ALMOST NEVER.** Ever read a cookie or cake recipe that calls for unsalted butter, at room temperature? Too bad such advice leads to flatter cookies, denser cakes, and tough quick breads. Why? Natch, it goes back to chemistry. Butter is an emulsion of fat and water, with some dairy solids in the mix. Emulsions are unstable by nature. Their parts do not fuse despite being homogenized. Instead, they remain separate in tiny droplets evenly distributed throughout. A vinaigrette is an emulsion of oil and vinegar with some herbs thrown in for good measure. The fizzy foam on a cup of espresso is another emulsion this time, of coffee oils and water. Both lead short lives. Oil and vinegar separate; the foam dissolves into the espresso. So it is with butter. It can fall apart, particularly when warm. Just above 67F, it starts to lose its coherence. Several degrees more and it becomes the soft spread that makes the desiccated hunk of bread we call toast edible. As the temperature rises, butter continues to lose coherence. It soon spreads out, no longer able to hold even its basic shape mostly because the solid fat in the emulsion is starting to liquefy. It used to hold the water in place; now its letting go, loosening up, getting more Unitarian. But below 67F, the fat is stiffer, more Presbyterian. It can hold its water. And it can catch air. Hold it, too. Which is why you beat a batter in the first place: to trap air, particularly in the fat. Thus, in most cases cool butter builds better batters. Cookies wont be flat; cakes will rise properly. Even cinnamon rolls will be more irresistible. (Oh, great.) Yes, there are some specialty recipes in which the butter must be at room temperature for example, when youre laminating a dough to make croissants, repeatedly working the butter into the dough through incessant rolling. But these sorts of things are unusual, laborious, pastry-chef tasks. For most cakes, cookies, and quick breads, for anything where the beaten butter is to provide airy heft, cold butter is the way to go. So how did this culinary zinger get started? Blame it on the 50s. Gone were the stand mixers, the behemoths our great-grandmothers hauled out to the counter. Every June Cleaver wanted a tidy hand mixer. Unfortunately, this modern appliance couldnt handle chilled butter. Bits spun around the bowl like lottery balls. The motor was weaker, too; it burned out quickly. And so arose a misguided attempt at making baking easier on the gadgetry, but not necessarily better all-around that is, the myth of room-temperature butter. These days, were back to the backbreaking stand mixer they can handle the cool butter youve got in the fridge. Admittedly, that butter is a little too cold the fat is way beyond Presbyterian, more like Dutch Reformed, probably around 40F. Heres the problem: you need the butter cool enough to trap air but not so hard that its petrified. The solution? Drag the butter out of the chill, cut it into small bits, and drop them into the mixing bowl. By the time youve got the other ingredients out of the pantry, the butter bits will have warmed up just enough that they wont burn out the motor but will still grab the air and hang on tight. Without a moments hesitation, make that batter or dough! Because a better cookie is the whole reason anyone would ever want one of those honkin big stand mixers that take up so much cabinet space.

**CHOCOLATE CHUNK CINNAMON OAT COOKIES** Makes about 4 dozen cookies Although salted butter outsells unsalted seven to one in the United States, unsalted butter is still the culinary standard. First off, the extra salt can lead to melting and boiling point differentials which may affect more temperamental recipes. But secondly, why should someone else determine the sodium content of your food? Yes, these crisp, flavorful cookies are better with a pinch of salt but not the heavier pour in salted butter. 2 cups plus 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour 1/2 cup rolled oats (do not use quick-cooking or steel-cut oats) 1 teaspoon baking soda 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon 1 teaspoon salt 16 tablespoons (2 sticks or 1/2 pound) cold, unsalted butter, cut into small bits 1 cup packed light brown sugar 1/2 cup granulated white sugar 2 large eggs 1 tablespoon vanilla extract 1 pound bittersweet chocolate bars, broken and cut into 1/4-inch chunks 1 cup chopped walnuts

1. Position the rack in the center of the oven; preheat the oven to 375F. Line a large baking sheet with parchment paper or a reusable silicone baking mat.
2. In a medium bowl, use a whisk or a fork to mix the flour, oats, baking soda, cinnamon, and salt. (Why? So the leavening and flavorings are evenly distributed in the dry ingredients.)
3. In a large bowl, beat the butter, brown sugar, and granulated sugar with an electric mixer at medium speed until fluffy, and until most of the sugar has dissolved, about 5 minutes. Youll need to scrape down the sides of the bowl occasionally with a rubber spatula. But dont be tempted to run that big mixer at a higher speed. More friction means more heat. Which means warmer butter.
4. Beat in the eggs one at a time, scraping down the inside of the bowl a few times and making sure the eggs are thoroughly incorporated in the batter. Beat in the vanilla.
5. Stop the beaters; pour in the flour mixture. Turn the beaters on low and mix in the flour, just until most of the white pockets have disappeared, not a moment more.
6. Turn off and remove the beaters; scrape any batter back into the bowl. Use a wooden spoon to stir in the chocolate and walnuts, thereby also fully incorporating the flour.
7. Roll heaping tablespoonfuls of the dough into balls between your palms. Set the balls on the prepared baking sheet, a couple of inches apart. Bake for 10 minutes.
8. Use a hot pad to pick up the baking sheet and give it a good rap against the baking rack. Continue baking for 2 minutes. Then do it again: a good rap against the baking rack. Continue baking until the cookies are brown and set, about 3 more minutes. Put the baking sheet on a wire rack and cool for 2 minutes, then use a thin spatula to transfer the cookies to the wire rack itself to continue cooling. Cool the baking sheet for 5 minutes before making another batch. Check to see if you need to replace the parchment paper because its too fried from having dried out.

**HOT SKILLET, COLD OIL. ONLY ON RARE, CHEFFY OCCASIONS.** Ah, the 80s. It was a heady time in the American culinary scene. A bunch of wide-load Cajuns and a galloping gourmet lit a mania for food and cooking from Julia Childs smoldering spark. They did it with suspenders and shoulder pads. And this dead-wrong

myth. The oil in the skillet or pan must be hot, not to seal in the juices (well come back to that one), but to keep the meat or vegetables from sticking. Heres why: First, fat smoothes things out. Believe it or not, the inside of your skillet or saucepan is not flat. Its landscaped with microscopic grooves, ridges, and gashes. Oil (or any melted fat, for that matter) fills these in. Likewise, cuts of meat or chopped vegetables are microscopically uneven. A thin layer of fat evens them out, too. So why do we care about smoothing things out? Because Second, fat is a lubricant. Now that the topography of your skillet is smoothed out, those many nicks and gashes dont snag your food. Thus, less sticking which means less tearing, chipping, and even scorching. Finally, fat gets really hot. Way beyond the boiling point of water. When food hits the hot oil, you get a good sizzle because the extraneous surface water on the meat or vegetable is instantly vaporized. The piece of food is then raised slightly above the skillets hot surface, riding on a tiny layer of steam. Thus, the caramelizing sugars dont fuse to the surface below. And by the time all that vaporizing is over, the meat or vegetable has a dried-out, crunchy crust. You know, the best part of the meal. But that crust also serves a culinary purpose. Crunchy things usually dont stick together very well if at all. Its also why patchouli-soaked hippie communes fail. If you think about it: How could oil ever stay cool in a hot skillet? A tablespoon or two in a preheated 300F to 500F skillet instantly spreads out into a thin sheet and pops up to the skillets surface temperature in milliseconds. Theres no way you can work quickly enough for there to be a hot skillet with cool oil in it. That said, sometimes you want cool oil in a skillet, particularly for very cheffy reasons. Like when you want to infuse the fat with herbs, or other flavors, so that the items to be sauted pick up more sophisticated flavors. To pull this off, pour pantry-temperature oil into a cold skillet off the heat, add a star anise pod or slivered garlic cloves or Sichuan peppercorns or red pepper flakes or fresh rosemary spears, and set the contraption over medium-low heat. As the oil comes up to a sizzle, those spices or herbs release their flavors into the fat for a more satisfying meal. When the oil is finally hot, remove the flavoring agents and youve got infused oil thatll crisp whatever youre cooking and impress even Cajun cooks as well as any gourmets who insist on galloping. **YOUR TONGUE HAS FOUR KINDS OF TASTE BUDS: SWEET, SALTY, SOUR, AND BITTER. AND DO CHICKENS HAVE LIPS?** So much bad information gets bandied about in elementary school. Eating paste wont make you sick. Holding it in all day gives you character. And the darn tongue map: sweet on the tip, salty at the sides, sour farther back on the sides, and bitter way back in the center by the epiglottis. Okay, debunking this myth is easy. Get up and go in the kitchen. Well wait. Get a pinch of salt. Put it on the tip of your tongue, the part thats supposed to taste sweet. Do you taste salt? Yes. Still dont buy it? Now get a pinch of sugar. Put it way back on the center of your tongue, on the alleged bitter receptors. Do you still taste sweet? Yes. Done. And by the way, holding it in all day doesnt give you character. So howd this tenacious tongue myth get started? Back in 1901, a German professor, D. P. Hanig, conducted an experiment (we use the term loosely, as in a state-funded science fair project) in which he asked people their subjective experience of taste. Here ist ein apple. Vere do you taste eet on your tongue? He used no controls nor any critical apparatus to judge the answers he got. Maybe he had no time, what with Kaiser Wilhelm II driving the country into war. Still, Hanig blocked out the results of all that anecdotal evidence on the now-familiar map of the tongue. It soon got foisted got off onto children. Here are the facts: By the 1970s, researchers believed there were differences in taste centers on the tongue; but they also thought these could move around, depending on a persons history, proclivities, and age. By the late 1980s, researchers had finally come to the conclusion that the actual differences between these tasting centers were, at best, minimal. Then in 2006, researchers actually found one of the many proteins that allow us to taste sour. And they found it all over the tongue, not just in one area. Dr. Hanig did us no favors. The truth has been a long time coming, holding out at least until the late 80s, if not beyond, waiting for hard evidence like we got in 2006. And yet we continue to see that tongue map even these days. Why? Because of wineglass makers. They coo that the shape of their stemware directs the wine to the appropriate parts of the tongue. The wider Burgundy glass pours the wine onto the salty receptors and then back to the sour ones, letting us taste the savory notes, missing the overpowering sweet and bitter ones that would register in the tongues center. Its a more pleasurable experience, they say. And a naughty wine. Yeah, right. And they dont even have the Kaiser to pin that doozy on. **DECAFFEINATED COFFEE HAS NO CAFFEINE. CLOSE BUT NO CIGAR!** Its midnight. Youre wide awake. You paid the bills. You called your mother. Why cant you fall asleep? All you did was have a few cups of decaffeinated coffee. Which contains caffeine. Based on U.S. standards, between two and twelve milligrams per cup. (Europeans have stricter standards, and so far less caffeine.) Its not much, for sure. A cup of regular coffee has somewhere between a hundred and two hundred milligrams. But a few cups of decaf, combined with some sensitivity on your part, plus your usual anxiety levels and bang, youre awake. And dont be fooled by those big coffeeshouse drinks, the frothed, whirred, whipped-cream-topped, Dairy-Queen-Blizzard-for-hipsters coffee drinks. Three or four shots of decaf espresso in that cup and you may have had as much caffeine as is in a can of Coke. How do you get wired on caffeine? It suppresses signaling mechanisms throughout your body: the unconscious stuff, the stuff that lets you live your life without thinking about it, like your breathing and heart rate, as well as the metabolism of every single cell. With the signals out, the traffic goes wild. You cant fall asleep. Hello, walls. Well, since youre up, lets dispense with a few more caffeine myths: Espresso has more caffeine than brewed coffee. Sort of. One ounce of espresso can have three times the amount of caffeine when compared to one ounce of brewed coffee. But nobody drinks one ounce of brewed coffee. Instead, that eight-ounce cup can have 2 1/2 times as

much caffeine as that one-ounce espresso shot. Tea has more caffeine than coffee. Sort of. On average, tea leaves can have almost double the amount of caffeine as coffee beans but both brewed coffee and espresso have more caffeine because more ground coffee beans are used by weight to brew each cup. Caffeine is addictive. No, although it is a stimulant. And once you get used to any happy jolt, you begin to rely on it. Like getting a raise. Or saying good-bye to your in-laws. But banking on something is not the same as being addicted to it. Going off coffee wont threaten your social, economic, or personal well-being. Instead, you may have headaches and increased irritability for a few days. Those are the symptoms of a dependency. They do not warrant the official, medical label of addiction. Caffeine can help you sober up. Absolutely not. Its not as powerful as the alcohol in the vodka you just downed. In fact, coffee and alcohol are a dangerous combination. You feel more alert but youre still dead drunk. The only way to sober up is to stop drinking. But well get to the boozing myths later. For now, youre still awake. Dont worry: theres darkness at the end of the tunnel. Caffeine hits its peak in the blood within two hours. After that, it falls off quickly, usually during the next hour. So go watch a movie. By the time its over, youll be sleepy particularly if youve chosen some flick the hipsters have been raving about over their frothed-up coffee drinks. **SPICY FOODS COOL YOU DOWN. JUST THE OPPOSITE, IN FACT.** This is the first of many myths based on an oversimplification or a misunderstanding of some basic facts. To understand its nuances, lets examine some scenarios. Its 105F, a hot summer day. Youre roasting on the deck, quaffing a beer. You think, Gosh, I could really go for nachos right now. Soon, friends arrive with nachos! (Hey, it could happen.) You peel off a chip with a big jalapeo on top. You bite down and feel the burn. A trickle of sweat runs down your forehead. Sure enough, you shiver. Listen, it wasnt the chile that made you chilly. In fact, that jalapeo warmed you up. It was the sweat that cooled you down. And that reaction may not happen every time. It depends on several factors. Sweating leaves moisture on the skin. Moisture evaporates. Evaporation is a cooling process. The water traps the heat and then lifts off as a gas, pulling the heat away from you. The sweat dries; you feel cooler. That is, in the best of all possible worlds. If youve been baking in the sun for a couple of hours and drinking nothing except one or two lousy beers, youre going to be pretty dehydrated and youre not going to sweat that much. Whats more, any cooling process via sweat evaporation wont happen on a humid, muggy day. Or it will happen so slowly, your heat-stroked brain will get no relief. Plus, a breeze has to stir the air to make the sweat evaporate quickly enough to do you any good. So if youre sweating outside on a 105F day, and if youre properly hydrated, and if its a relatively dry day, and if you happen to feel a light breeze, you may feel a little chill after eating that incendiary jalapeo. But not because of the jalapeo. In truth, eating almost always increases your core temperature. Blood rushes to your stomach during digestion. You dont cool off after eating a hamburger. In fact, you may feel warmer even wilted on a summer afternoon. But eating a chile is a different ball of heat. The burn is caused by a chemical compound called capsaicin. Impress your friends with its real name: 8-Methyl-N-vanillyl-trans-6-nonenamide. Or not. Capsaicin raises your metabolism. Thus, your blood vessels dilate and carry more blood specifically, out from the bodys core and into those little capillaries along your skins surface. There, the blood heats up your skin. You may flush. And in turn, sweat. So the truth of the matter is that capsaicin warms you up. Your body then takes care of that problem with its own natural defenses. You sweat. Unless you eat too many nachos. In which case too much blood will rush to your stomach and youll feel hotter because of the digestive fiesta going on down there. But dont worry: the bathrooms probably air-conditioned. **FOOD PREPARED AT HOME IS SAFER THAN FOOD PREPARED IN A RESTAURANT. YOU D THINK SO, BUT NO.** More people get sick from food at home than from meals in restaurants. First off, a restaurant gets inspected. When it fails, the matter becomes public record. The joint may get shut down with an embarrassing notice pinned to its front door. Thus, a restaurant has a profit motive to keep people healthy. Second, good food safety is all about proper hand washing. Statistically, that happens more frequently in a professional kitchen than at home. How many times do you wash your hands while preparing dinner on an average weeknight? Finally, the safety of food is a matter of its temperature which must be below 40F or above 140F, the so-called safe zones. Thats partly why chefs walk around with an instant-read thermometer in their pockets. Chances are, you dont even own one of these gadgets at home. Not that you should take the temperature of the stew thats been sitting on your dinner table for thirty minutes. If youve kept the lid on, it may still be above 140F. And even if not, bad bacteria havent yet had time to set to work. Its probably not going to make you sick. But it might if you leave it out on the counter all night and have it for lunch the next day even if you reheat it back into the safe zone above 140F, killing all the bad bacteria. Because the residue from once-proliferating-and-now-dead bacteria can be as bad for your stomach as the live bacteria themselves. And some of that residue can only be destroyed at temperatures beyond the reach of a quick reheating. Theres yet another reason people get sick more often at home: they believe culinary myths. They believe that they can shove a piece of meat in a marinade and leave it at room temperature for hours because vinegar kills everything. Or they believe that you can tell when a piece of meat is done by how it feels. The solution to this culinary threat to your health is twofold: Wash your hands often when preparing food. Practice good temperature control: below 40F (thats your fridges temperature) and above 140F (not at a boil but still hot). All that said, the real threat to your digestive tract lies neither at home nor in restaurants but somewhere in between. Quite literally. Its the take-out and prepared meals that you have to look out for. Sure, theyre hot at the restaurant. But then a delivery boy puts your dinner on his bike, drives around, finally gets to your place, rings the bell, waits for you to answer the door and pay, and then hands it over. You unpack

the food, go back to the TV, and finally eat the lukewarm, uh-oh food at your own risk. Or you pick up a prepared meal at the grocery store, shop around some more, put your dinner in your hot car, drive home, fire up the DVR, and eat the questionable, lukewarm food. No amount of hand-washing can rinse off the number of bacteria possible in those take-out cartons. NEVER REFREEZE MEAT. FEEL FREEMOST OF THE TIME. Its Tuesday. Your mother-in-law is coming for dinner on Friday night. You take the chicken out of the freezer, set it on a plate to catch the juices, and put the whole thing in the refrigerator. It sits there all week, thawing slowly. On Thursday, you play bridge with her. By Friday, shes still not talking to you. And youre not cooking for that son of hers. He can eat cold cuts at her house. Still, youre stuck with a thawed chicken in your fridge. What will you do? 1. Throw it out and be the profligate daughter-in-law she always thought you were. 2. Roast it anyway, eat the whole thing yourself, and get fat as she always said you would. 3. Put it back in the freezer, call a friend, and go out for a liquid dinner to salve your feelings, and end up in your towns drunk tank as she predicted you would. The answer is any of the above. Theyre all perfectly fine from a culinary standpoint. In terms of your mother-in-law, youre on your own. If food has been thawed in a 40F refrigerator and maintained there for a day or two at 40F or below, it can definitely be refrozen. But note that temperature: 40F. Thats the safe point. And that goes for power outages, too. When the lights come back on, if whats in your freezer is still partially frozen and if the temperature in there has not gone above 40F, let the compressor kick in and refreeze the stuff. As usual, weve got a few howeveres. You will definitely lose moisture during the first thaw all those juices on the plate in the fridge and then again during the second thaw. You wont have the juiciest chicken imaginable. But next week, you can take some comfort in the fact that his mother doesnt deserve your best cooking anyway. The meat may develop ice crystals which will turn into that dreaded, desiccated freezer burn. Cut away those bits, even if youd like to serve them to her on a silver platter. If the meat has been left out at room temperature for more than two hours, do not refreeze it. If, when you bought the meat at the store, either a sign or a label stated it was previously frozen, you cant be sure how it was thawed that is, if it was thawed at the safe 40F temperature. Do not refreeze this meat. By the way, this whole refreezing fandango goes for leftovers with meat, too. Take a container of chili out of the freezer on Monday and put it in the fridge, wait a couple of days, be out of the mood for chili on Wednesday, and put the container right back in the freezer. Now look whos a frugal, savvy, and competent daughter-in-law after all.

OYSTERS ARE AN APHRODISIAC. MAIS NON! This one may have started with the movie Spartacus. Specifically, with dialogue like this: Crassus: Do you eat oysters? Antoninus: When I have them, master. Crassus: Do you eat snails? Antoninus: No, master. Crassus: Do you consider the eating of oysters to be moral and the eating of snails to be immoral? Antoninus: No, master. Crassus: Of course not. It is all a matter of taste, isnt it? Antoninus: Yes, master. Crassus: And taste is not the same as appetite, and therefore not a question of morals. Antoninus: It could be argued so, master. Crassus: My robe, Antoninus. My taste includes both snails and oysters. To which Antoninus should have replied, Is that a mollusk in your pocket or are you just glad to see me? Okay, maybe one movie doth not a myth make. Its also been said this whole nonsense started with an alleged resemblance: oysters are supposed to look like a certain part of the female anatomy. Whoever came up with that one needed to get out more often. In truth, oysters are made up of water, protein, carbs, fats, minerals, natural sugars, and salts. Not a one is a known aphrodisiac. But every one is necessary to good brain functioning which is a much bigger aphrodisiac. Plus, oysters are expensive, a treat. You usually have them when youre really putting on the dog. You make a reservation at a fine restaurant, one with plush drapes and cut crystal. You arrive with your date. You order a dozen oysters. You tuck in. You savor the good life. Soon, youre happy. And a little frisky. Theres the aphrodisiac: the narrative, the story, the whole thing that swirled up in your head. I work a temp job and make no money, Ill be paying this dinner off until Im a hundred and fifty, I dont care, Im having a good time, Ill take another sip of wine, Ive forgotten my troubles, I deserve this, I think we should go back to my place, I think respects really important, and no, you cant stay over because I have an early meeting. By the way, the same thing goes for all the other alleged culinary aphrodisiacs: chocolate, nuts, ginseng, turtle eggs, the testicles of any animal, or powdered rhino horn. Its all in your mind. And soon enough in your pants.

THE ADJECTIVES USED TO DESCRIBE THE SIZE OF SHRIMP MEAN SOMETHING. BULL HOOEY! All adjectives associated with the size of shrimp are mere ad copy. Colossal, gargantuan, crazy-ass big these words are put on the sign so youll stop and pay attention to that nice man standing at the fish counter waiting to sell you something. In truth, shrimp are sized by how many of their tails make up a pound. Yep, their tails. We in North America eat only the rear ends of these squirmy buggers. We knock off the heads and bodies, which, together, are about as long as those tails. Did you know that some freshwater shrimp can grow to be a foot or so by the time you take their heads into account? But forget about the Nessies of the Red Lobster set. Lets focus on what youll find at the supermarket. For proper sizing, you need to know how many tails make up a pound. Now it gets complicated. Because its about math. If about thirty-five shrimp (tails) make a pound, were talking medium-size shrimp, good for stir-frying and such. If twenty make a pound, were talking much bigger ones, perfect for shrimp cocktail. And if ten make a pound, were talking a knife-and-fork affair. Beyond ten per pound, we get into categories the industry calls U. As in U-5s. That is, it takes fewer than (or under) five shrimp (tails) to make a pound, each one ringing in at a little less than a quarter pound. And U-2s? Were back to the Nessies, each tail weighing in at a little over half a pound. While were debunking crustacean myths, lets also talk about baby shrimp. They arent babies. Theyre full-grown shrimp that live in the icy

waters around Newfoundland, Alaska, and Greenland. Although they usually run more than a hundred to the pound, small is still not young. They can take four years to reach maturity. They arrive in the freezer section of your supermarket shelled and precooked. Which is a good thing, because these guys, like all shrimp, are easily overcooked. All are done when the flesh has turned pink, opaque, and slightly firm. For shrimp at thirty per pound, thats about 4 minutes on a grill over high heat. For those at twenty per pound, maybe 6 minutes. Overcooked shrimp turn rubbery, even squishy thats nobodys idea of a good dinner. But long before you get to the grill or stove, the only thing you need to know is how many shrimp (tails) make up a pound. You bet size matters. Just dont take anybodys word for it.

**LOBSTERS SCREAM WHEN YOU BOIL THEM. WTF?** Lets set up a culinary syllogism, shall we? 1. To scream, something must have vocal cords. 2. Lobsters dont have vocal cords. 3. Lobsters cant scream. End of discussion. So whats the high-pitched whine you sometimes hear when you drop a lobster in a pot of boiling water? Superheated vapors whistling out from the joints in the shell. In the end, this culinary myth is probably the result of anthropomorphization, a common fault with us humans and our cortex overflow. We have more brainpower than we need. You can probably think of counter-examples, particularly among your co-workers. Trust us: the rest of us do. Our brains saw away at this thing called consciousness, even when we dont need them to. We have to put all that thought energy somewhere. Mostly, we project it onto the world. Happy trees. Peaceful clouds. Screaming lobsters. Um, no. Trees are not happy. Clouds are not peaceful. We are. But we pay it all forward. And end up with our food screeching at us. In truth, this question about lobsters and their shrieks is really about pain, right? Do lobsters feel pain when theyre boiled alive? Probably not in the way you and I would. Back off PETA. We and all mammals feel pain because of a chemical reaction along nerve channels connected to our brains. Were not talking about emotional pain, caused mostly by dating; were talking physical pain, a matter of the central nervous system. Which is the very thing a lobster lacks. Truth be told, its a fairly simple organism. Not as simple as a clam which is no more than a mouth, a stomach, and an ass. (Sound like anyone youve dated?) But not as complex as a cow, a pig, or a politician. Simple or not, lobsters are vicious beasts. They spend their lives picking fights. Inevitably, somebody gets a claw snapped off and doesnt show the usual signs of mammal pain. Doesnt grab the limb, doesnt back away, doesnt flinch. Thats not to say a lobster doesnt have a nervous system at all or doesnt feel something akin to pain. Just look at all that flailing as you hold the creature over the pot of boiling water. Its a defensive posture. And intriguingly, it happens before the things put into the pot. As if it knows something. It may be some sort of rudimentary dread. It may be mere intuition. But in either case, its pretty complex. Chances are, a lobster has never seen a pot of boiling water. Chances are, its never been in a kitchen. Chances are, its never experienced heat. Yet it knows what it knows without prior experience. So pain in the way we experience it? The vast majority of marine experts say no. But some sort of elemental dread? Perhaps although that comes near to a projection on our part, too. In the end, a lobster is one of the few animals youll bump off in your kitchen. These days, weve left the job of killing meat to others. Sure, some people hunt. Or fish. But most of us are not present at the death of our dinner. So the whole lobsters-scream projection is a result of our own complex issues swirling around this very real dread called death as well as its connection to eating. Even if youre a vegetarian, you still eat something thats died; or if youre a raw-food maven, you put it to death as you eat it. We eat things that have already experienced the very thing we most dread. We cant solve that foundational riddle of existence here. We can only acknowledge it.

**PERFECT LOBSTER WITH THREE DIPPING SAUCES** Knocks off 4 lobsters Youll need the biggest pot you can find probably a wide 10- or 12-quart monster. Plus a steamer rack to go inside the pot. When steamed, lobster is less water-logged and thus tastier than when boiled. Plus, the timing is much more forgiving. Tap water 2 tablespoons salt Four 1 1/4-pound live lobsters One or more of the dipping sauces (recipes follow)

1. Fill a huge stock or soup pot with about 2 inches of water and add the salt. Set the steamer rack in the pot, cover, and bring the water to a boil over high heat.
2. Open the pot and put the lobsters on the steaming rack, one on top of another. They must be alive. And they will flail. Some claim to hypnotize lobsters by rubbing their underbellies. (Really? A creature without a brain can be hypnotized?) And some put the lobsters in the freezer for 15 minutes to delay the flailing. But is it more humane to freeze to death? Look, youve got two choices: suck it up so the lobster wont have died in vain, or become a vegetarian.
3. Cover the pot and steam for 7 minutes. Then use big tongs to rearrange the lobsters, switching around whos on top, whos at what angle, all for even cooking. Cover and continue steaming for 5 more minutes. If youve got bigger lobsters, theyll take longer. Ones that are 1 1/2 pounds, about 8 minutes more; ones that are 2 pounds, about 13 minutes more. By the way, a red shell is not the best indication that a lobster is done. After the right amount of time, crack one of the lobsters open where the shell meets the body and check the meat. It should be white, not translucent. If its a female, there will be roe (egg sacks) running down the tail. The roe should be red and firm, not black. Transfer the lobsters to serving plates and enjoy them with one or more of these dipping sauces.

**Melted Herb Butter** Melt 2 sticks of unsalted butter with a sprig of fresh tarragon and a couple of smashed, peeled garlic cloves in a little saucepan over low heat. Remove the herbs and garlic, then use a spoon to skim off any foam. Spoon up or pour off the clear liquid in the pan, leaving the gunky white milk solids behind. Discard these in favor of the clarified fat.

**Easy Cocktail Sauce** In a large blender, combine and blend: 1 cup tomato juice, 2 tablespoons jarred prepared white horseradish, 2 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce, 1 tablespoon tomato paste, 1 tablespoon lemon juice, and several dashes hot red pepper sauce, such as Tabasco sauce.

**Chimichurri Vinaigrette** Pure

all of the following in a large food processor fitted with the chopping blade: 1/2 cup olive oil, 1/3 cup packed parsley leaves, 1/4 cup red wine vinegar, 3 tablespoons packed oregano leaves, 1 teaspoon dried red pepper flakes, 1 teaspoon salt, and 4 slivered garlic cloves.