

Hi there! You're listening to episode #33 of the Cook Smarts podcast. I'm Jess Dang the Founder of Cook Smarts and I'm here to help you become a more confident and organized cook in the kitchen

How are you? I didn't think this day would come but my kids are all safely back in childcare. There was a part of me who thought we were gonna be in quarantine forever and daycares and schools were never gonna open, ever again but here in Santa Clara County, California we are in Phase 2 of reopening, which allowed preschools and daycares to open up to non-essential works, with of course a lot of new restrictions put in place for everyone's safety.

So Neko and Bowie headed back to school at the beginning of this month. Instead of 4 rooms, there are now just 2 rooms with 2 teachers each with a maximum of 10 kids, so right now no more than 20 kids can be enrolled and still they're under-enrolled with 6 kids in each classroom. Our school has continued to offer online classes so some teachers are doing that for the families who are still choosing to stay at home. I totally get that. Sending kids back to childcare is a very personal decision. For us, we really trust the staff at our school to follow the guidelines. We realize of course there is a risk but for us, we felt that the benefits of getting our kids back into their regular routine outweighed the small chance of us getting really sick with COVID. Our family has no pre-existing conditions. We don't have older grandparents living with us right now. In the end, it is a very personal decision but Emily Oster who is an economist wrote a really good post to help you figure out how you can better frame your decision of sending kids back to school or groupcare and also whether it's safe to see grandparents, something that I know is on a lot of family's minds.

Some of the restrictions in place are: Parents don't get to go inside anymore for dropoffs and pickups. Instead somebody comes out and takes the kids temperatures, gives them hand sanitizer, and also sprays Lysol on their shoes because why not? The teachers wear masks all day and try to keep the kids socially distant, but that just feels a bit much for a bunch of 3 year olds. And then Neko is in Bowie's class to minimize risk of exposure, which is tough for her. She really misses her teachers and her classmates but we know it's safer for everyone. Plus, it'll just be 2 months because she will start some form of kindergarten whether it's all virtual or a mix of in-person and virtual, we don't know. We have gotten notice from the city that they definitely won't be having everyone back on campus full time but the details of what that means remains to be seen.

The baby is also back in her home daycare which is just a 10 minute walk from our house. Donna has taken care of all my kids and Charlie has been going to see her since she was 4 months old but unfortunately the last 3 months at home have totally wiped her memory of daycare, I think. Plus she's in the height of stranger danger, has not been in anyone else's home for 3 months, so there have been lots of tears at dropoff.

We know it is such a privilege to have childcare right now and I feel so lucky and grateful for it. I want everyone coming out of this to appreciate your kids' teachers and care providers a lot, lot more because they do some tough work.

So with all 3 kids in childcare, you would think I would have been super productive so far this month but it has been a transition for me too -- I'm still getting back into a routine but mostly everything that is happening in our country has just kept me so distracted. I'm actually just going to read something I posted to Instagram about 2 weeks after George Floyd's death:

*"I spent the last week completely distracted from work and home ... so much so that I didn't even meal plan. Instead, I listened to many brave and inspiring black voices and tried to process their experiences, fears, and hopes. I marched and chanted. I supported black-owned restaurants in my area. I wrote my elected officials. I donated. I realized that I didn't own 1 cookbook by a black chef and in trying to rectify that, I discovered that so many of these cookbooks are now sold out, which feels revolutionary in its own small way.*

*And now this week I am back to work but in a very different way. I started Cook Smarts because I believe access to health should be available to everyone, but one cannot feel wholly healthy when you are forced to carry the emotional and psychic burdens of racism, when your access to healthy foods has been caught up in the wreckage of systemic racism.*

*I am far from having all the answers. Truthfully, I mostly have questions and lots of learning to do but I have so much hope and energy for the work ahead, and I pledge my sweat and tears to creating an equitable world and an equitable food system because we cannot be healthy in our minds and our bodies unless those things exist.*

*To moving forward because what was wasn't enough."*

So since posting that, I have just been in student mode, which I really like being in. I have known since I started Cook Smarts that systemic racism is at the root of the health inequities in our country but I want to do more than just know that, I want to help fix that. How? I don't know yet. Like I said in my Instagram post, I am far from having all the answers and mostly just have questions but I know there are so many people who have dedicated their lives to this issue, and I look forward to reaching out to more of them, hopefully bringing a few onto the podcast so that we can all be more enlightened to the health injustices that are invisible to many of us, if we're not black or brown.

Before I started Cook Smarts I would read articles about how the obesity rates and Type II diabetes rates were rising in the US, and the stress of that would keep me up at night. Much of the reason I wanted to create Cook Smarts was to help reverse those numbers, but what these recent events have shown me is that I can't do that unless I am ready to unpack the role of racism in making these numbers especially pronounced in black communities. We have always worked with a handful of non-profits, providing them with access to all our infographics as

materials they can use in their own community outreach, but I know we can do more. So there will definitely be lots of uncomfortable work ahead as I examine all the things I don't know, but it might also be the most meaningful work I get to do and I promise to keep you posted.

So now bear with me because I'm gonna have to take a real sharp turn into some business before we head into the episode. I know we were just talking about some deep, soul-bearing things but our business is what allows us to contribute to all of these other things. So a little FYI, we are in the middle of our summer sale. Now let's first talk about summer. It might not be the summer all of us planned. We have personally canceled all of our usual summer trips, which is really disappointing. Our kids are too young for camp any way but there is just going to be so much less to do with them this summer with a lot of stuff closed or severely limited in their operations. But you know one thing about summer that we can all still depend on -- summer ingredients and food. Summer produce is just the best -- juicy tomatoes, crisp cucumbers, zucchini that can be turned into so many things, all the peaches and plums, all the melons, all the berries, and we cannot forget my favorite thing about summer, corn on the cob. Like just eating endless corn on the cob with those little skewers that were in the shape of baby corn, slathered in so much butter, is something I will never forget about my childhood summers in Maryland. Back then you could get like a dozen corn for a dollar -- it was amazing.

So know that summer is not going to look like past summers, but we are committed to giving you the best of summer on your plate and at your dining table. I know that it's been a weird couple of months and if you want to get back to some sort of normalcy and routine, this is the time to join our meal plan service. We are in the middle of our summer sale, and you can get 20% off with the code SUMMER20 through July 2nd. Just head to [cooksmarts.com](http://cooksmarts.com) to sign on up. I've always been very committed to continually improving our member experience, and we recently added a feature that allows you to easily add a shortcut to the site on your mobile phone so that it basically functions and feels like a native mobile app. It's pretty great and allows us to hopefully skip developing an app now. I know there are folks that would really love to see us in the app store, but building and maintaining an app are expensive investments, and this little workaround allows us to give you that app experience without the burden of that expense, which definitely is significant for a small business like ours. Ok, that was a total tangent, but my point is, join us, get back to a dinner routine, enjoy the best of summer food, and use the code SUMMER20 for 20% off.

That was the longest pre-episode monologue I'd ever done but I had a lot to catch you up on, and now I can teach you about flavor profiles.

Now if you are gonna learn to cook, you gotta understand flavors. Even if all you seek to be in the kitchen is a recipe follower, having a basic understanding of flavor profiles, how they work with each other, can really help you troubleshoot a recipe or know how best to use substitutions. And for those cooks who want to be more than a recipe follower -- someone who is comfortable improvising in the kitchen, making up your own recipes, then you must understand how to build and marry flavors.

Luckily, you don't need to go to culinary school to learn how to do this. Today I'm gonna teach you the 5 foundational flavor profiles using our Flavor Star, patent pending on that, to help you understand how to create more dynamically flavorful meals.

First, let's review the basic flavors. Up until 2002, scientists recognized 4 'official' tastes: 1) salty; 2) sweet; 3) sour; and 4) bitter. However, in 2002 umami was crowned the fifth flavor. Umami simply means yummy in Japanese, and it's hard to describe what the flavor of umami tastes like. For simplicity sake, we are lumping it with salty in this lesson because they share a lot of the same flavor attributes.

Now if you are offended by this, you probably should be attending culinary school because your taste buds are far more refined than ours are. For the purpose of this flavor lesson, I'm also including spice as our fifth flavor because we love a little heat and it can really add so much to a meal.

Now because so many of us learn graphically, we created a Flavor Star infographic to explain how these 5 flavors work to balance and enhance each other. This is a podcast so you cannot see the infographic, which is why you must head to the show notes -- the show notes link is in the podcast description so you can see what I'm talking about but for now, I will make this super simple so that you can follow along just by listening.

So going back the Flavor Star explains how flavors balance and enhance each other so what does that exactly mean? If a flavor balances another flavor, it means it counteracts or offsets that flavor to achieve an even more harmonious taste. For example, spice balances sweet and sweet balances spice. It's why Mexican hot chocolate is finished with a pinch of cayenne pepper -- the spice works with the sweet to produce a more dynamic flavor.

Or if you have a dish that's too spicy, you can also balance the heat with something sweet. So if you ever over-spice a curry or sauce, just add a bit of your preferred sweetener to neutralize the heat.

Flavors can also enhance each other. If you look at the Flavor Star, you see that salty enhances sweet and vice versa. This is why there are sea salt caramels or sea salt chocolate chip cookies. That light addition of saltiness actually amplifies the sweetness of those caramels and cookies.

If you keep this Flavor Star handy, you can learn how to create more dynamic flavors, rescue dishes that have been overly flavored, and also how to amplify certain flavors. By using this flavor star, you will actually become a flavor star and to make sure you don't forget that, I'm gonna sing you a song I wrote to the tune of Ghetto Superstar:

You're a flavor star

That is what you are  
Tasting so much more  
Reaching for the stars  
Make each bite taste good  
We can rely on each other, uh huh  
From one kitchen to another, uh huh

So that was a first for this podcast and probably a last. I'm gonna keep at that and refrain from rapping because nobody needs to hear that. Basically I know you got it what it takes to become your own flavor star.

But to do so we will need to dig a bit deeper into each of our five flavors, and we're going to start with my favorite salty and umami or also savory. Now if the world were divided into 2 flavor camps -- savory or sweet, I am definitely in the first camp. I will always prefer savory to sweet, and my most important pantry ingredient is salt and because of my love for salt, I lean heavily into this flavor profile.

Now if you have ever ended up with a bland dish, the likely issue is that it's just been under-seasoned, meaning that it lacks enough salt, and this happens to everyone. Any Top Chef viewer knows that an under-seasoned dish is the most common mistake made by the show's contestants. These are all professional chefs, and it happens to them, so clearly under-seasoning is not just a rookie mistake, so don't ever feel bad about a bland dish, but also don't settle for a bland dish -- know how to fix it.

The obvious fix would be to add some salt, but there are a lot of other condiments and ingredients that can add savory depth to your meal.

Some Asian condiments that are naturally umami are soy sauce, fish sauce, or miso. From a more Mediterranean pantry, anchovy paste, parmesan cheese or tomato paste all have umami characteristics. Those are all easy condiments that you can add to stocks, marinades or sauces to create more umami flavor, even after the dish is done cooking.

So let's say you're making a soup, and it's just a little bland. You can of course add more salt, but you can also use one of the condiments that we just mentioned, and it doesn't have to conform to the particular cuisine meaning you can use soy sauce in non Asian dishes, non-Asian soups. I use soy sauce in just about every marinade I make because it's not going to make the dish taste Asian, it'll make the dish taste full of umami flavor and I said before, I am in the savory camp.

And I don't want folks to overlook miso either. Our Cook Smarts members have loved all the miso sauces we've introduced them to and these days I will use miso in just about all of my soups when I want to keep them vegetarian. I used to use Better than Bouillon, which is a brand of basically bouillon paste that I love, so I was often using their vegetable flavor as an easy

shortcut for flavoring vegetarian soups but I ran out of that and just haven't replaced it so I've been using miso instead, and it's such a lovely way to add more flavors to soups, especially when you want to keep them vegetarian. And again, it doesn't necessarily make the soup more Asian tasting -- just more tasty because it's adding that umami layer that so many of us love.

Now there are also lots of ingredients that have an inherently salty or umami foundation. Seaweed or kombu is used to make dashi, a Japanese broth, that is the basis of miso soup. So in that case, it's not just the miso that makes miso soup so umami flavored, it's also the kombu. When you roast tomatoes or dry mushrooms, their umami-ness is unleashed. Brined ingredients like olives and capers are also great for adding salt to dishes. And then certain cheeses do the same thing. We already mentioned parmesan cheese, but feta and blue cheese also add salt to a meal.

Lots of seafood are naturally salty as well because well, the ocean is salty -- anchovies are by far the most salty but mussels, clams, sardines, shrimp, bonito flakes and scallops all can provide salt to a dish.

As for proteins, all the cured pork products -- ham, prosciutto and bacon can all provide a dish with some deep salty flavor. It's why people use ham hocks for soups or bacon in collards -- for that salty seasoning.

So when you are looking through a recipe, take a look through the ingredients to see what in that list is going to build that salty, umami base, especially if that flavor profile is your favorite, like it is for me. Maybe it's just going to be salt at the end but you can also think about one of the salty and umami-containing condiments or ingredients that I've just listed to help build that up so you have a dish that really packs a punch.

And if you look at our flavor star, you'll know that sour and sweet flavors can further enhance saltiness, which is why prosciutto and cantaloupe or bacon and maple syrup are such perfect combinations. That play of salty and sweet together make both more pronounced. It's also why you'll find recipes combining mushrooms and sherry vinegar or lots of different seafoods with lemon or lime. The umami and sour together bring out more of both those flavor profiles.

Next I want to cover sweet. Now when we think of sweet, we typically think of desserts but there are definitely ways to use sweetness in everyday cooking and flavoring as well. According to our Flavor Star, sweetness balances sour, bitter, and spice, so if you have dishes or ingredients that have any of these flavor profiles, add a bit of sweetness to create something even more interesting.

So when I was a kid, my job in the kitchen was to season and tenderize the meats that would go into our family's stir-fries, stews, and curries. I would sprinkle pieces of chicken, pork, and beef with salt, white pepper, and sugar. Yes -- sugar. We always seasoned our meats with just a bit of sugar. My grandmother explained that the sugar wouldn't make the meat taste sweet but

rather create balance and enhance the effect of the salt. And so I still use that advice today, so when I'm creating a marinade, I will often use a bit of maple syrup or brown sugar to really coax the salty flavors out.

Now I know it's not as common in Western cuisine to use sweetness in everyday cooking but it is very common in many Asian cuisines, like Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean, and Thai. And most of the sweetness can be found in their sauces, and I think that's what makes cuisines so delicious is because they're taking advantage of a flavor profile that's often overlooked in Western cuisine aside from using it in desserts.

So all those cuisines use a lot of sauces that contain quite a bit of sweetness in them. In Chinese cooking, you have oyster, hoisin, XO, plum, sweet and sour sauce, which use ingredients like brown sugar, honey, ketchup or juices to create sweetness.

The master sauce in Vietnamese cooking is nuoc nam, which is sweet, salty, and sour all mixed together and to create it, you actually sort of start by making a simple syrup. It's not quite as thick and you don't use quite as much sugar, but you do start by dissolving sugar in boiling water. And then from there, you layer on saltiness with fish sauce and sour with lime juice and if you want some spice from chopped chilis.

All those flavor profiles work together to enhance and balance each other out, creating a really dynamic taste. You also find that sweetness and layering in Thai food. A Thai curry has sweetness from coconut milk and sugar and then you layer on savoriness from fish sauce, spicy and earthy notes from herbs in the curry paste, and sour from the finish of lime juice, so very similar idea to what you find in Vietnamese cooking.

And then probably the most popular Korean dish in the Western world is Bulgogi and a bulgogi sauce is known for its sweetness but it's not like we're eating beef with caramel sauce. The sweetness in bulgogi works because it's layered with saltiness from soy sauce to create a more interesting combination of flavors.

Now you do find sweetness in some American sauces like ketchup and BBQ sauces. Those are definitely two condiments that similar to the Asian cuisines I mentioned are using an interplay of sweetness, umami, sour, and in some cases heat to make something way more delicious.

Other ways you can use sweetness in your everyday cooking is adding honey, maple syrup, or jam to an acidic vinaigrette to neutralize the sourness of the vinegar because sweetness and sourness balance each other out.

Sweetness also balances out bitter so if you're roasting a more bitter vegetable like Brussels sprouts or broccoli, try adding a bit of brown sugar or maple syrup to build another dimension of flavor. Spinach and other dark greens can have a slightly bitter taste, which is why salads with

dark leafy greens marry so well with fruits, so a spinach and strawberry or apple salad are some of my favorite combos.

And one way to use sweet to troubleshoot something that's gotten too spicy, which has happened to a lot of us, you can mellow that spice out with some sweetness.

Now there are also lots of ingredients that are naturally sweet -- carrots, sweet potatoes, corn, beets, a lot of winter squashes like delicata or butternut, sugar snap peas literally have the word sugar in them, fennel, parsnips, peas, and of course most fruit. So if you're looking to build a soup or curry or salad and want to add a sweet element to create contrast, look to those ingredients. And an easy way to make the sweetness in those ingredients more pronounced is by combining them with something salty or umami flavored. So if I'm roasting carrots or sweet potatoes, you might add some miso paste to create both sweetness and umami in the same bite.

So next, let's talk sour. I think sour is an under-appreciated and under-recognized flavor, and most of us don't realize how much sour contributes to our dishes.

If you look at the Flavor Star, you'll see that sour also balances spice, sweetness, and bitter too. This is why a dollop of yogurt or sour cream or a squeeze of lime juice is perfect for a spicy curry or stew. Or it's why pickled vegetables are really common in cultures that love spicy food. That sourness from the pickled vegetables helps tame heat and spice and of course creates a new layer of flavor and texture at the same time.

It's also why, as I mentioned before, we have sweet and sour sauce in Chinese cooking. The sweet and sour play together to form a whole new taste where neither one really overpowers.

Another way to combine sweet and sour is through pickling as well. I mentioned carrots and beets when I was discussing naturally sweet ingredients and that's why they're so interesting to eat when they're pickled because you get both sweetness and sour in the same bite.

Sweet and sour is also a really common flavor combination in desserts too of course with dishes like key lime pie or lemon bars. That natural pucker from limes and lemons is perfectly married with sugar to create something that's still tart but layered with sweetness so it's not like just taking a bite out of a lemon or lime.

And in terms of sour balancing out bitter, when I'm cooking my green vegetables that tend to have a bitter undertone like kale, spinach, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, I often will finish it with some lemon juice, which serves to mellow out that bitterness. It's also why we love a good spinach and artichoke dip because the sour cream mellows out the bitterness of the spinach. It's why my kids like dipping broccoli in yogurt. Again mellows out that bitterness.

In addition to balancing out those 3 flavors, sour also serves to enhance saltiness, and that is why finishing a dish with a hit of acid (the flavor, not the drug), just brings the meal to life because going back to the very beginning a bland dish is most often an underseasoned, undersalted dish but when you add acid to the end, you're enhancing the seasoning that's in the dish. So I'll finish pasta dishes, stir-fries, roasted veggies with lemon juice, and it really just brings out all the flavors in the dish.

And then the sour-based sauce that I use almost every day and you might too are vinaigrettes. Vinegars and citrus are inherently sour and they form the basis of all vinaigrettes, so that sour works to balance out the bitterness of the greens in a salad, or spiciness if you're using a green like arugula. You might have fruit in your salad and the sour of a vinaigrette also balances the sweetness of the fruit. And it also to enhance the saltiness in any of the ingredients.

So again, like I said sourness is underappreciated -- it's a team player and is found way more often in food than we know.

Next let's cover bitter, which we'll do quite quickly because 1) we've mostly covered how the other flavors work with bitter already and 2) we're usually not trying to create bitter as a desirable flavor profile.

Typically what we have are naturally bitter ingredients like spinach, kale, dandelion greens, endives, radicchio, broccoli, okra, bitter melon, Brussels sprouts, and we're looking for ways to temper that bitterness. Like we mentioned already, that's typically done with sweetness or sourness but it can also be done with umami, which I didn't really go into in that section so I'll cover that here.

So just like sweetness and sourness, adding umami to something that's naturally bitter can help to mellow out that bitterness. Some classic ingredient combos that achieve that are bacon with Brussels sprouts or parmesan cheese on broccoli or radicchio, or stir-frying spinach, bitter melon, and broccoli with a soy-based stir-fry sauce.

There are times that you might want to add bitter to your meals though and if you do, according to the Flavor Star, you should use it to balance out salty or sweet flavors. You can do that with some coffee, cacao, grapefruit juice, or even beer. The most common ways I've seen bitterness added to a dish are in chili when you might use a beer or coffee or in a mole sauce when you add cacao to marry bitter and sweet. I'm a very adventurous person eater, but I will say that I typically don't gravitate towards sauces or stews that have bitterness to them, so I've never really enjoyed a mole -- I'm still open to always trying but it's just not my favorite but I do love just about all the bitter vegetables, with the exception of bitter melon. It's common in traditional Chinese cooking and I will always eat it when my parents make it but I also just don't get it because it is sooo soo bitter.

And last but not least, let's talk about spice. Even though the Flavor Star shows that spice balances sour and sweet, we're going to go a bit off the diagram here. Honestly if you like a bit of spice in your food, just add spice.

You can do it early on in a meal by using peppers to build a meal that has spice integrated into the dish or you can add spice afterwards with hot sauces and just know pretty much every culture has its own traditional hot sauce. Harissa is used in Middle Eastern and North African dishes and it's a smokier heat. You have Sriracha used more commonly in South East Asian cooking that tends to have some sweetness in it. And of course all of the Mexican pepper based hot sauces that lean a bit more sour because they tend to have vinegars and citrus incorporated. But all have spice and you get to pick the spice you want. Of course there's also wasabi and horseradish to clear your sinuses too.

And then ingredients that have a natural spicy pepperiness aside from peppers are arugula, raw radishes and watercress. So as we've learned through the other flavor profiles, if you are using an ingredient with spice, you can counter that spice with something sweet or sour. I think I've mentioned that arugula salad is great with a fruit like strawberries or plums or peaches marrying that spice and sweet together. Watercress goes really well with some creamy lemony dressing. And I love raw radishes with like a sweet maple-butter or a sweet balsamic dressing.

So there you have it our 5 flavor profiles and how they work together.

If it wasn't obvious from what we went over, one of the easiest ways to add flavor to a meal is through a sauce. So let's say you've just grilled some veggies -- it's summer, it's the perfect season for it -- but they taste kinda bland. Again, you can use a bit of salt to bring out the natural flavors in the veggies but you can also make an olive tapenade or a pesto or even a salsa and immediately you have options to add umami from the olives or acid or umami from the citrus or parmesan in a pesto or spice from a salsa.

Like a bowl full of raw veggies don't taste that great but you pull it together with a vinaigrette or a cream-based dressing and you have something so much tastier. A turkey sandwich isn't that interesting but a turkey sandwich served with a Sriracha mayo, now I'm on board. This is why in my house, we often keep meals pretty simple and clean, which makes it a bit more approachable for the kids too, and serve things with sauces so they have more control of and also more fun with flavors. Not gonna lie -- the sauce for the kids is mostly ketchup or sour cream but we've learned that sweetness and sourness can do a lot to a dish so I'm all for that.

Now real briefly, I want to move into how understanding these 5 flavor profiles help you make flavoring substitutes. In the Cook Smarts Facebook Group, one of the most common questions we get asked is around substitutes. Like I don't have fish sauce, can I use soy sauce? Or I don't like olives, what can I use instead? Or I don't have lemons, but I do have limes -- does that work? When trying to figure out substitutes in cooking -- this does not work for baking -- is to

understand what flavor role did that ingredient have. Was it there to add umami or saltiness? Was it there to add sourness? Was it there to add sweetness?

Once you understand that, you can then figure out how to make an appropriate substitute.

So let's go back to the 3 examples I mentioned and break them down further. The first one was can you substitute soy sauce for fish sauce? The answer is yes. Fish sauce, while it smells very pungent, adds deep umami flavors to whatever meal or sauce you're adding it to. That is its flavoring role, so you need to find something else with that same umaminess, and soy sauce is perfect for that. It won't taste exactly the same because fish and soy sauce have slightly different tastes, but the flavoring role both have is the same so if you used soy sauce instead of fish sauce in a particular meal, you still would be adding umami to that meal.

Now the next example I mentioned was, "What if I don't like olives -- what can I use instead?" Olives are all about salt. If you have a raw olive, it tastes nothing like the brined olives we buy in jars and cans because they have literally been sitting in very salty water. So if you want to replace olives in a pasta dish or in a salad, you want to find another ingredient to take on that flavoring role of saltiness. So you could do roasted tomatoes because when you roast tomatoes, you're bringing out their inherent umaminess, so it ends up providing savoriness to a dish. You could also do something like artichoke hearts that have been brined because they'll be salty as well. You could even do like a pepperoni, prosciutto, pancetta, ham, or bacon -- all of those are salty, cured meats. Or a salty cheese like feta or parmesan. Or you could choose to leave out the olives but then make sure to taste and figure out if you just need to add some salt to fill in for the flavoring role that those olives were supposed to play.

The third example I wanted to share are limes for lemons or vice versa, because often you just want to buy 1 citrus and use them interchangeably. No problem if you understand their flavor roles again, right? So both provide acid or sourness. Lemons tend to be a bit sweeter and limes tend to have a subtle bitterness. So if you're substituting lemons for limes, you might be losing out on the subtle bitterness that limes offer. Unfortunately, there's not a lot of bitter sauces out there, so you could instead mellow out the sweetness of the lemon with a bit of spice because spice and sweetness balance each other out, as you will see when you visually see our Flavor Star. If you're a lime for a lemon, you can add some of that sweetness you're missing by not using a lemon. Simple as that.

So I know that was a lot about flavors but you cannot have food without flavor and knowing how to get more flavor into your meals will truly elevate your cooking and give you the knowledge you need to become a much more confident cook in the kitchen. With just this basic understanding of flavors, you have the tools you need to just go out and start experimenting -- how exciting is that? And before you know it, I know you're gonna be a Flavor Star, that is what you are.

To make sure that you actually start using this new knowledge, I'm gonna assign you some homework. I know homework but this is a fun assignment. I want you to think about your favorite

recipes and meals and dissect them for their flavor profiles. Like figure out what ingredients are giving it savory or umami flavor. Is there sweet, sour, bitter, spice? How do the flavors work together? Once you see that, you can then replicate it in other meals you're cooking. You are welcome to share your homework with me -- I would love to know what you've learned.

So clearly we are always tinkering with flavors here at Cook Smarts and using this knowledge is how we figure out how to build a recipe. Like where is the umami going to come from. What sour notes do we need to add to bring everything together? And now you can do that too!

Alright before we go, remember our summer sale is happening so let us help you get back on track in the kitchen and give you lots of flavorful recipes for you to start tinkering with. Just head to [cooksmarts.com](https://cooksmarts.com) and use the code SUMMER20 for 20% off.

Also, we need your review. If you love supporting scrappy little businesses like mine, I need you to take 2 minutes and head to Apple Podcast to tell others why they should be listening. I think an episode like this contains basic knowledge that everybody could use in the kitchen but so many of us just don't ever learn these things. So spread the cooking love just like trextolf did: "We discovered Cook Smarts when my husband and I were first starting to work full time and needed something better than the 5-10 dishes we were making over and over again. Cook Smarts has really shown us how to experiment with different foods and dishes and we love the flexibility of it! Now with this podcast, we have a nice, easily digestible way to get more tips for the kitchen!!"

Trextolf, you are the winner of a Cook Smarts tote bag or face mask -- just reach out to us at [hello@cooksmarts.com](mailto:hello@cooksmarts.com). If we read your review in a future episode, you've got a colorful and functional Cook Smarts bag or vegetable-pattern face mask waiting for you. The face masks are brand new to our RedBubble store and we're gonna be wearing face masks for a while so add ours to your collection.

Remember you can always drop me a line on Instagram at [cooksmarts](https://www.instagram.com/cooksmarts) or even a text to 650-386-0290 with any cooking question and we'll try to cover it in a future episode. We'll see you back here in two weeks. Thank you for letting us join you in your kitchen or wherever you're listening to this podcast, and until next time, happy cooking from your kitchen cheerleader!