

Really Useful Time Management Tips from a Cooking Show

By Inez O. Ng

In life, there are lessons available to use everywhere. We just have to have our eyes open to spot them. I have picked up some really useful time-management tips from watching a cooking show. Suspend your disbelief and let me explain further.

I don't watch a lot of television because it can be a huge time drain. But I enjoy experimenting and cooking, so I do watch a few cooking shows now and then. One of my favorites is "30 Minute Meals" hosted by the ever perky Rachel Ray. Her claim to fame is that she can show you how to prepare healthy, great-tasting home-cooked meals in 30 minutes. Who can resist that?

After experiencing more than a few episodes of her program, I've come to realize that she is a master at using time. That's how she can get so much accomplished in 30 minutes. And here are her "secrets" that you can easily adopt.

Spend time in Planning

Most cooking shows lasting 30 minutes will feature maybe one item. In "30 Minute Meals", Rachel Ray generally prepares three to five items working alone in her kitchen. She doesn't have helpers and the ingredients haven't been pre-chopped or diced or julienned ahead of time. She doesn't have another perfect soufflé sitting in the oven waiting for her to whip out at the end to show you how it should turn out. She really does the cooking in "real time." So how does she do it?

Before Rachel Ray even steps foot into her kitchen, she has the entire process for preparing the meal planned out. Does the dessert take longer to cook than the entree? If so, then it makes perfect sense to start the preparation of the dessert first. She knows which sequence of steps is the most efficient based on the planning. She knows exactly which ingredients she needs from the refrigerator so that she only needs to make one trip, which saves her time.

So, here's our real life application. When you look at your list of things to do, or errands to run, how can you use planning to become more efficient? How many "trips to the refrigerator" can you save by improving your planning?

Utilize Every Minute

This may sound like a no-brainer, but how many of us are really experts at this like Rachel Ray. She constantly talks about her "pockets of time." When the water is heating up for pasta, she uses her pocket of time to chop onions, butter bread, cut up chicken, and anything else she can fit in. By using these little pockets of time, she whips up a meal in 30 minutes.

Now for our real life application: how many times have you put off doing something because you only had 15 minutes and the task takes an hour? What if you can't find a whole hour to work on that task for another week, but you can actually squeeze in 15 minutes everyday for the next 4 days? By using your little pockets of time, you are able to complete the task this week instead of next week. That's the secret to getting more done.

Become a master at this like Rachel Ray. If you only have 10 minutes before you have to go to a meeting, return one phone call. This gives you the perfect incentive to be efficient about concluding the call. Pick up pockets of time everywhere and see how much more you can accomplish during your day.

Simplify whenever possible

Rachel was making a creamy tomato soup one day. Everybody knows that home-made soup takes hours. What was she thinking? Instead of putting in whole tomatoes and letting them cook for hours and then straining and blending the mixture, she put canned tomatoes with some garlic and celery into a food processor, and added the mixture into her pot of hot milk. She simplified the process! Some gourmet will probably shudder at the thought, but the soup looked pretty appetizing to me, and I'm sure it is much better than opening up a can of Campbell's.

Often times we do things a certain way because that was how we were taught. The sad truth is, how we were taught might not be the best solution anymore. Technology is changing everyday and there are so many more resources available to us now that were unheard of even a generation ago. The more steps there are in a process, the more opportunities there are for errors. Look at what you are working on and how you are completing the task and try to simplify it if at all possible. A direct result of that is improved efficiency, which results in more time for you.

Now you have the time management lessons I've learned from the cooking show. Apply them and see what a difference they make to your day. And if you're cooking, I'll be right over.

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