

In Search of the Perfect Omelet (or is it Omelette?)



You really should know how to spell the word so I'll make you a gift of the answer: the rule is that Americans love omelets and the rest of the world loves omelettes. But...wait for it...rules are made to be broken. While "omelet" is preferred in the U.S. many American chefs use the European spelling, omelette. American spell-check programs generally accept either one so no harm, no foul, spell it however you like. But stay with me to learn how to make a great one.

Chefs agree that what seems like an easy dish actually requires a delicate touch, precision timing and a practiced feel for the egg in order to pull off a truly fine omelet. In fact, the ability to make a "perfect" omelet is something many chefs consider a milestone in their careers.

So what is the perfect omelet? It is one of the three benchmarks often used by chefs when considering the hire of a new chef or cook. The list includes a perfect salad with a perfect vinaigrette, roasted chicken and a plain omelet. All are seemingly simple, but all expose the chef's skill or lack thereof.

Wolfgang Puck had this to say in a recent interview for Bon Appétit magazine:

“When we hire any chef for our restaurants, I tell them to make me an omelet, because an omelet is one of the basics every chef should know. Yet very few can make a perfect omelet so that it’s perfectly cooked and perfectly shaped. To me, an omelet has to melt in my mouth; it has to be tender and soft. I still remember when I made and ate my first omelet with black truffles. I thought it was the most perfect dish.”

Celebrated New York chef/restaurateur, Dale Talde, recalls striving for his first perfect omelet:

“In order to get it right, I had to start with a pan that wasn’t quite yet hot, then add the butter – but never let it brown! When the butter started to bubble, I added three eggs and whipped – but not too much! Then you move, stir, stir, and move again until they’re set – not brown – and tilt the pan in an awkward position. While doing that, you would shake the eggs out in a way that the eggs fold on top of themselves. At first, it made no sense to me.

And then, two years after culinary school, I saw Jacques Pépin make an omelet, and it all made sense. He has this cool trick when you hit your hand as you’re tipping the pan, and it folds perfectly on top of itself and slides right out onto the plate.”

Here’s that lesson I promised you: enjoy this engaging video of Jacques Pépin explaining and making not one, but two types of omelets – bit.ly/1rjG8Cc.

In Jacques’ case, of course, he is showing us how to make perfect **omelettes**.