

## When a Gratin Becomes a Ganache

I depend on influencers and chef blogs for my daily eats. When I need to whip up mousse or steam bibimbap, I turn to the internet. There's a recipe for everything. So of course I was one of the first people to wonder if something had gone terribly wrong.

The first clue was my overly salty Saltimbocca. The recipe came from *Cooks Illustrated*, so I was sure every ingredient had been carefully tested in their kitchen laboratory. So why was my sauce so salty? I had to throw the whole dish out. I chalked it up to human error and moved on.

It wasn't a week later that I had another disaster. I was watching @evelyncooksamerica. Her soufflé video made the result look fantastic. Her kitchen was well-lit and spotlessly clean, but something was wrong with the recipe. The soufflé was excessively spicy and I only had minutes before the guests arrived. I dumped a bunch of pasta in a pot, heated some store-bought tomato sauce and managed to serve up rigatoni. The dessert didn't taste right. The recipe didn't call for a sweetener!

I blamed social media culture. Why would someone post a recipe without checking the text? I turned to Martha Stewart's website, where the real cooking happens.

Who wouldn't smile, imagining Martha Stewart and Snoop Dogg making sandwiches together? It's dependably heart-warming. That's the same way I feel about Martha's chef-tasted recipes. I know they will delight my guests. But not this time. Her recipe for garden sandwiches included placing a leaf of lamb's ear between the tomatoes and the chickweed. I almost choked when I bit through the furry leaf. Two days later, Martha posted that her site had been hacked.

I tried my favorite blogs, authored by chefs that I trusted – the best cookies, the most delicious bread, the tastiest gluten-free crackers and the most savory curry. Bloggers blogged about learning to cook with their grandmas, how they explored different diets to get through health crises and how they improvised to achieve their dream dishes. These were my people. I kept thinking, "One day that will be me." I saved my food photos for just the right moment.

I made sure that teaspoons weren't mistaken for tablespoons, but my recipe problems continued. Baby Food Bistro explained how to grind up the world's best baby food, but my baby threw up. Sweet as Sassafras

mixed me a foul-flavored mojito. It literally tasted like chicken. Angeline Cooks Italian had me boil my orecchiette into a giant, gelatinous lump and Hal's Homecooked Hamburgers' meat-free cheeseburger broke into crumbles, leaving my lunch date with a plain-old cheese sandwich.

People were complaining online. They posted their monstrous creations, labeled "Epic Fail Flan" or "Terrible Tournedos." It wasn't long before Mark Zuckerberg was called before Congress.

Senator Amy Klobuchar demanded to know why millions of Americans were forced to throw out their carefully prepared meals. Zuckerberg's response was both inspired and insipid. "We've identified some bad actors on the platform. We're fine-tuning our algorithm to eliminate problematic recipes."

Dozens of cooking sites revealed they'd been hacked. For many, it meant developing new recipes or documenting Grandma Ione's Avgolemono Soup. Chefs had to revert back to the three-by-five recipe cards of their ancestors which were food-stained and faded or completely unreadable.

Gourmets like me didn't have a whole lot of options. The sites we trusted most were being manipulated *(to be continued)*