



How to make the best s'mores ever: 5 tips for mastering this campfire classic

Stock up on chocolate and marshmallows before National S'mores Day.

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Friday is National S'mores Day and while no one knows for sure who invented the tasty, gooey treat, one thing is certain, they're absolutely delicious. Many believe this campfire classic was created around 1927 by the same group of girls who brought us Thin Mints, Tagalongs, Do-Si-Dos and Samoas.

In fact, when the Girl Scouts released a s'mores cookie last year, it became the best-selling new flavor in more than 100 years of cookies.

While s'mores-inspired cookies, cupcakes and donuts are just a few of the reinvented ways to enjoy the glorious, gooey combination of marshmallow, chocolate and graham crackers, nothing beats a classic s'more.

That's why the foundation of the country's only s'moreology program is all about mastering the fundamentals. The new program — which has three levels for aspiring s'moreologists — is available to guests staying at The Resort at Paws Up in Greenough, Montana. TODAY Food spoke with the program's founder, the resort's executive chef Sunny Jin. He recommends keeping the following things in mind if you want to get the most out of your s'mores-making experience.

1. START WITH SIMPLE INGREDIENTS.



Although the Korean-born Jin once worked at elBulli, the Michelin-rated restaurant famous for its avant-garde presentations, when it comes to s'mores he believes basic is best. There's no need to head to Whole Foods and load up on flavored-graham crackers, artisanal marshmallows or fancy organic chocolate.

"When you're introducing different elements like flavors, especially with marshmallows, you're going to get different results," explained Jin. The classic brands, Jet-Puffed, Honey Maid and Hershey's, are classic for a reason: they work. One added ingredient that Jin does like to employ occasionally is sugar. "Sometimes I'll dump a bunch of sugar and coat my warmed marshmallow in it and then put it back over the fire so I get a nice crunch on the outside."

2. IDENTIFY HOW YOU LIKE YOUR MARSHMALLOW.



Three marshmallows roasting on a stick in front of warm out-of-focus bonfire flames. Getty Images stock

Since the marshmallow-doneness is key, it can either make or break your s'more. Your ideal level of gooeyness is totally subjective, and it should be embraced. But it's also worth knowing what else is out there. For example, if all you know is the "char," when the marshmallow catches fire and you have to blow it out, you'll never know how delightful it is to have a center that is completely melted. That's because you're still

going to have a super dense, cold center despite the blackened, bitter exterior. Personally, Jin likes the "lightly toasted but gooey inside" which takes a little patience because you need a "slow, low, rolling roast."

3. EMPLOY THE PROPER ROASTING TECHNIQUE.



The Resort at Paws Up

The fewer flames you have, the more control you have. "If the flames are high, I would suggest turning your marshmallow frequently, if not the entire time," advised Jin, who likened this method to a rotisserie.

"If you're just working with the late night embers, you don't need to be so worried about it."

The key to avoiding flare-ups and getting the inside warm is allowing your marshmallow to hover over indirect heat like coals or embers, not over super-hot direct heat like flames. "When you're doing it right, the marshmallow doesn't really take on a color but you'll see it start to expand because that's what marshmallows do," he explained. "When you see the marshmallow start to expand by 20 percent you know it's cooked all the way through." In terms of roasting tools, any clean stick or skewer works. Just make sure it's long enough so you avoid getting burned.

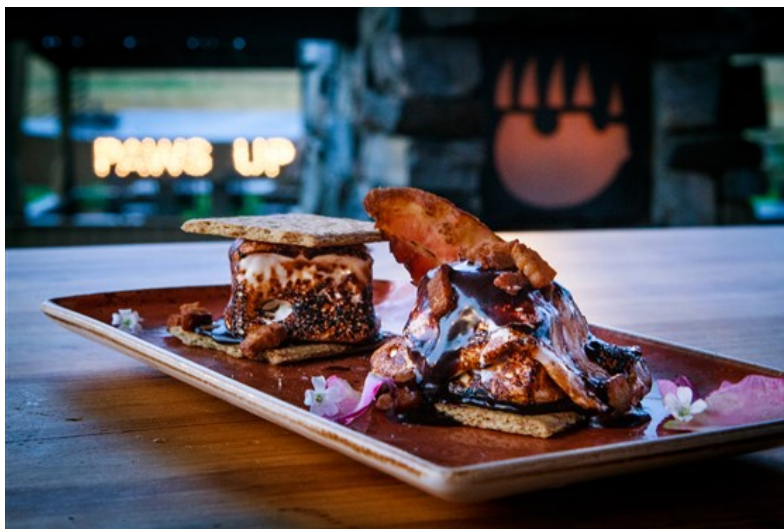
4. PRACTICE BEING PATIENT.



Boy with Roasted MarshmallowGetty Images stock

According to Jin, the the biggest mistake people make when it comes to s'mores is being impatient. That's why so many of us rush the roasting step and burn our marshmallows. The good news is that if you do it right, it should really only take about two minutes max to go from bag to bite. Jin also shared a time-saving tip he swears by: "I try to find a flat space like a rock near the fire where I can set my graham cracker with the chocolate on it so while I'm toasting my marshmallow it's sitting there melting," he explains. "Then, when I put my marshmallow on it all of a sudden I'm oozing chocolate and marshmallow combined."

5. UNLEASH YOUR CREATIVITY



The Resort at Paws Up

After mastering the basics, you'll probably want to elevate — or even deconstruct — your s'mores. It could be something as simple as swapping out the Hershey's for a different candy bar — Jin's inner child always picks Reese's Peanut Butter Cups — or it could be as complicated as stuffing your marshmallow with a creamy brie cheese and topping it with candied bacon, just like they do at The Resort at Paws Up.

Another favorite of Jin's is to incorporate local ingredients. "I'll forage for huckleberries when they're in season here in Montana and make a jam to spread on the graham cracker," he said, before adding that if you really want to get fancy you should buy a baby crème brûlée burner. "That's what we use in our kitchen when we make marshmallow sculptures."

And if you're make s'mores inside, Jin recommends using these handheld burners over an oven broiler, gas stove or microwave for more control.