

01 Dry Chicken

WHY IT HAPPENS

Cooked past 165°F — proteins squeeze moisture out like a wrung sponge.

THE FIX

Pull at 155–160°F. Rest 5 min. Carryover heat does the rest.

02 Rubbery Chicken

WHY IT HAPPENS

Cooked too fast at high heat — muscle fibers seized up before heat reached the center.

THE FIX

Lower heat, longer cook. Pound breasts to even thickness first.

03 Steak Is Gray, Not Brown

WHY IT HAPPENS

Pan wasn't hot enough or meat was wet — steam prevented the Maillard reaction.

THE FIX

Pat completely dry. Get pan screaming hot before the meat goes in. Don't crowd.

04 Pasta Sticking Together

WHY IT HAPPENS

Not enough water, or rinsed after draining — rinsing removes the starch that holds sauce.

THE FIX

Use a large pot. Salt heavily. Never rinse. Sauce immediately after draining.

05 Cake Sank in the Middle

WHY IT HAPPENS

Underbaked, oven door opened too early, or too much leavening — structure collapsed before set.

THE FIX

Don't open the oven in the first 2/3 of bake time. Test with a toothpick at center.

06 Sauce Broke / Separated

WHY IT HAPPENS

Heat too high or added fat too fast — emulsion couldn't hold the bond.

THE FIX

Low heat always. Add fat slowly, whisking constantly. Cold butter to finish cream sauces.

07 Vegetables Are Soggy

WHY IT HAPPENS

Overcrowded pan turned roasting into steaming — moisture couldn't escape.

THE FIX

Single layer only, with space between pieces. High heat (425°F+). Dry them first.

08 Food Is Bland

WHY IT HAPPENS

Undersalted at the wrong stage — salt added only at the end can't penetrate.

THE FIX

Salt every layer: water, vegetables, protein, sauce. Taste as you go, not just at the end.

09 Bread Came Out Dense

WHY IT HAPPENS

Yeast was dead, dough under-proofed, or too much flour packed in.

THE FIX

Proof yeast first in warm (not hot) water. Measure flour by weight, not volume.

10 Eggs Are Rubbery

WHY IT HAPPENS

Too high heat — egg proteins tighten fast and expel moisture instantly.

THE FIX

Low and slow for scrambled. Remove from heat while still slightly wet — carryover finishes them.

11 Soup / Stew Too Salty

WHY IT HAPPENS

Liquid reduced and concentrated the salt, or over-seasoned early.

THE FIX

Add a raw potato or more unsalted liquid. A splash of acid (lemon) masks saltiness.

12 Garlic Burns Instantly

WHY IT HAPPENS

Added to oil that was already too hot — garlic has sugars that scorch at high temp.

THE FIX

Start garlic in cold or medium-heat oil. It should sizzle gently, not pop and brown immediately.