The importance of spice solubility

By K. FAE HULL
Staff Writer

Do you ever wonder why certain spices should go into your pan in the order that they do? The answer is spice solubility. Spice solubility is the idea that certain spices and herbs are soluble in water, and others are soluble in oil.

Generally, ground spices are soluble in oil. You want to bloom these dry, ground spices in a fat and not pour them directly into water or other liquids until after they have bloomed. Blooming these spices enriches their flavor, draws out color and carries it throughout the whole meal, using less spice for more flavor.

Whereas pouring them into water can take a lot of spice to build any flavor, and can taste dusty in comparison to bloomed spice. This is why using finishing oils like chili oil in a soup can add much more flavor than just the dry spice. If you've already added water to a dish and need more flavor from an oil blooming spice, using a finishing oil, whether store bought or made yourself, may just save it. Common oil blooming spices are cumin, white pepper and paprika.

On the other hand, leafy spices and dried herbs work better in water or broth; their flavors are drawn out and rounded. This is similar to steeping tea leaves to draw out the flavor. Cooking in water also softens ingredients, and cooks things at a much slower pace than oil does. Soups and stews boil on the stove much longer than fried foods, because the time allows the spices to steep better and richens the flavor. Common water blooming spices and herbs are mushrooms, cinnamon, ginger and tea.

There are some exceptions, however, and it is important to look into the specific properties of spices before properly cooking them. If you find something different that works better for you based on a combination of ingredients, and personal preference, that's good, that is how cooking is supposed to work. Saffron and cinnamon are exceptions, as powder spices that bloom best in water. Dried peppers are an exception in the way that they gain benefits from blooming in both oil and water. Cooked in fats, dried peppers gain a toasted flavor and in water they soften to be easier blended into sauces.

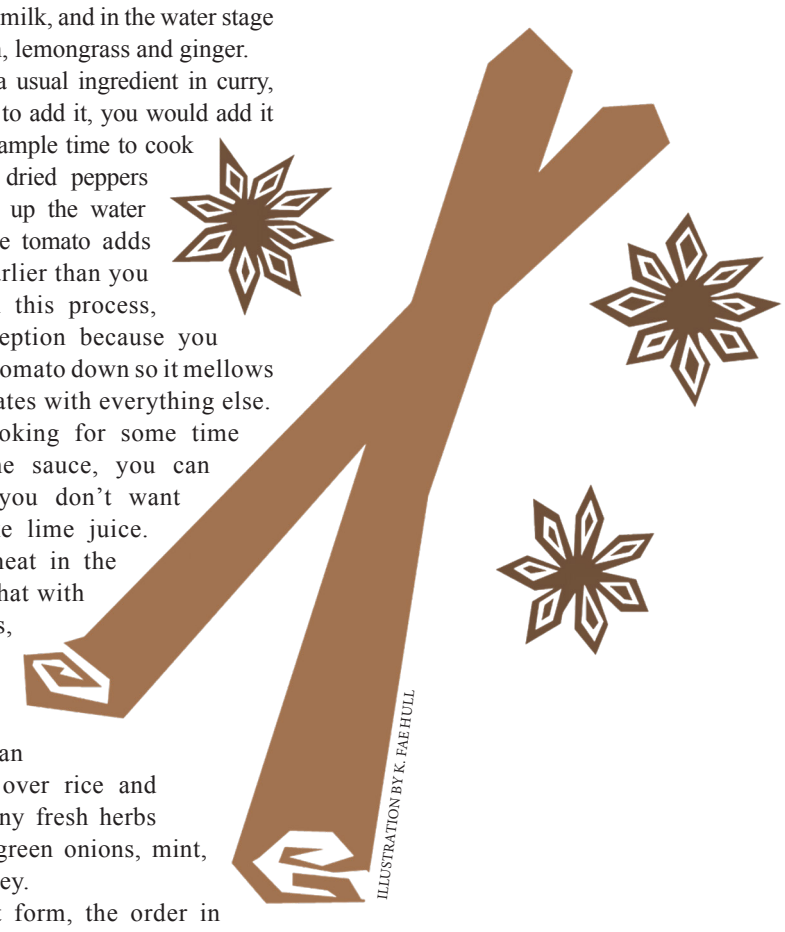
Besides oils and waters, there are alcohols, acids and fresh herbs which can be added to recipes for flavor at different steps along the way. Alcohols, like extracts, can carry flavors very well and wines can add depth to sauce. They should be added earlier to cook off properly. Acids are a later step, as they can slow the softening of something being cooked in water and cooking them can cut their tart flavor. Unless you want to mellow out vinegar or citrus juice, you should add it later. Fresh herbs are the very last step, best used as a garnish as any cooking can ruin their fresh taste.

Cooking curry is a great example of how cooking with the solubility method works. You start with an oil or butter in the pan, aromatics like onion and garlic and dry powder spices like cumin, white pepper and curry powder. You can toast dried peppers in this stage too. Then you add in water with the tomato paste, broth and coconut milk, and in the water stage you add cinnamon, lemongrass and ginger.

Alcohol is not a usual ingredient in curry, but if you wanted to add it, you would add it here, this gives it ample time to cook off. The toasted, dried peppers will start soaking up the water and softening. The tomato adds an acid a little earlier than you would expect in this process, but it is an exception because you want to cook the tomato down so it mellows out and incorporates with everything else.

Then after cooking for some time and blending the sauce, you can add any acids you don't want to cook out, like lime juice. You marinade meat in the sauce and cook that with some vegetables, letting the sauce simmer and thicken. Finally, you can serve the curry over rice and garnish it with any fresh herbs you want, be it green onions, mint, thai basil or parsley.

In its simplest form, the order in which to cook things is best remembered as "fat, water and acid." If you remember this order, and try to stick to it, this method can improve your cooking and deepen flavors to their full potential.



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What Battlefront III means for games

By REX NAYLOR
Staff Writer

When Star Wars Battlefront II launched in November 2017, fans were slapped in the face with an aggressive pay-to-win system. After the launch, no one thought the game would survive more than two years; however, nine years later the game is alive and well.

With the release of "Andor" and the Jedi Survivor games, Battlefront II connected with fans longer than anyone anticipated, even after the game no longer received support from developer DICE after 2020. Since then, the game has lain dormant in gaming libraries.

The resilient player base never truly died and has come back time and time again for big events every year, like May 4, otherwise known as "May the Fourth Be with You."

Still, there was one wish the fans wanted more than anything else, and it was a third installment, which would be known as Battlefront III.

The wish was one of hope, as game developers had moved away and the reunion was becoming increasingly unlikely. For years, both Electronic Arts (EA) and DICE maintained that no Battlefront III would be made. Then Oct. 21, everything changed.

Seemingly out of nowhere, EA executives Cam Weber and David Tinson announced that Battlefront III was in its early development stages, with Respawn Entertainment and DICE collaborating on the project, with Bloomberg and Variety confirming.

This news sent the Star Wars community into a frenzy. No one expected the announcement, especially with no sound coming from EA before this. EA decided to cancel the "Mass Effect" project and shut down developer BioWare to allocate resources to Battlefront III.

BioWare's games featured story driven, character focused role-playing games (RPGs). "Mass Effect" is considered to be one of the best sci-fi RPGs with deep lore and intricate and curated stories.

A new Battlefront game almost guarantees more money even if it's not well made and features a weak story while solely focusing on online content.

Immediately, YouTube channels made videos about the huge news, short-form content took off and anticipation for the now-confirmed Battlefront III finally started to build.

The announcement is a testament to the fans. Even after one of the worst launches in gaming history with Battlefront II, the community never left the game; they found new ways to keep the franchise alive.

With Star Wars characters being added to Fortnite alongside "Andor" season two releasing, players flocked back to Battlefront II with over 120,000 concurrent players on all platforms in May 2026.

On Steam alone, the concurrent player count peaked at 9,377. That month might've been the deciding factor for EA to make plans for a third installment.

On a larger scale, Battlefront III means so much to the Star Wars community, as by the time it comes out, over a decade will have passed without a new multiplayer Star Wars game.

Still, even with the optimism many fans have for Battlefront III, EA's choice to shut down Bio Service is setting off alarms.

The reason Battlefront II no longer received support was to give support to another DICE game, Battlefield 2042. The news sparked outrage in the Star Wars community as the announcement came out of the woods, similarly to how fans currently feel about "Mass Effect."

Battlefield 2042 failed terribly, which intensified the Star Wars community's disdain for the game developers even more.

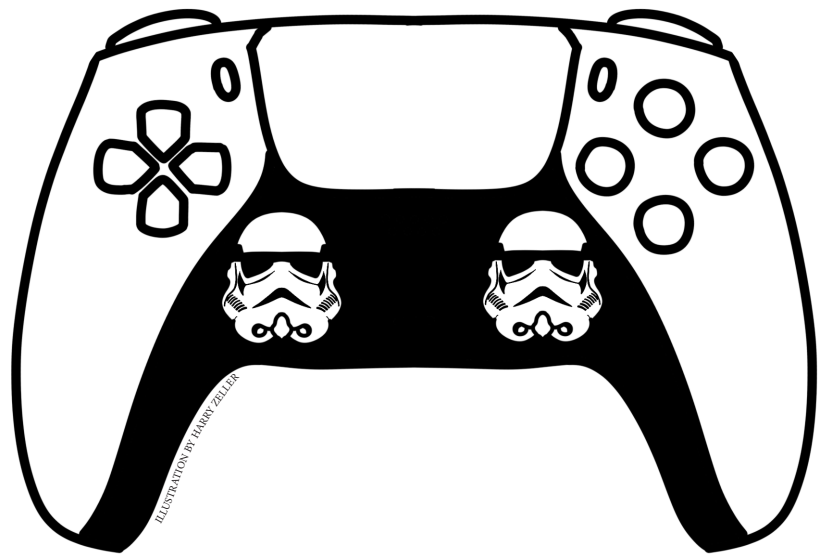
What Battlefront III means for the gaming industry is that one project will always have to be cancelled for another. Developers who garnered a cult-following and dedicated fanbase will be brought out by EA, who demand micro-transactions and large player bases to continue support.

If the developers don't deliver on every nearly impossible aspect, they will be dropped and the same process will start all over again. With heavily recognized intellectual property like Star Wars, smaller games with a smaller fan base stand no chance in convincing board members to choose their game.

Games are forced to move away from the identities that brought them to the forefront of the gaming industry for corporate greed. In a broader scope, games without a large IP behind them will struggle to get off the ground, as corporations such as EA would rather something tried and true than a risk.

Everyone, myself included, is excited for Battlefront III, although there's no release timeline in sight. How the game performs will tell the gaming industry where corporations want money to come from.

Unfortunately, EA doesn't care for fan enjoyment, only what will make them money. If the fans are happy with the news, imagine how happy they'll be when the game comes out.



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