

Kitchen Essentials

You need only a few basic cooking utensils. Gadgets are not necessary and clutter up your drawers and cabinets. Most gadgets can be replaced by a sharp knife. There should be almost nothing in your kitchen that has a single use. Keep it simple with just a few multi-use kitchen essentials.

- Wooden spoon(s)
- Rubber spatula(s), preferably high-heat tolerant (silicone)
- Large spoon(s)
- Vegetable peeler
- Can opener
- Measuring cups and spoons (dry and liquid)
- Grater (box grater is most versatile)
- Several good knives
- Mixing bowls
- Cutting board
- Tongs
- Colander
- Instant-read thermometer

Buying pots and pans



You do not need a lot of pots and pans to be a great cook. You may already have the basic pots and pans that you need in your kitchen. If you do not, here are some tips:

- Buy good pots and pans—not the cheapest and not the most expensive.
- Check restaurant supply stores, discount stores or warehouse stores. They offer equipment at good prices.
- Buy what you need, as opposed to a set.
- Basics to get you started:
  - —1–2 non-stick skillets (To avoid scratching, use non-metal utensils and follow manufacturer's suggestions for cleaning.)
  - —Stir-fry pan or wok
  - —Large pot with lid
  - —1–2 pots with lids
  - —Roasting pan
  - —Cookie sheet or pizza pan
  - —Casserole dish

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CHOOSING THE RIGHT KNIVES

A good knife is the most essential piece of cooking equipment in your kitchen. While there are dozens of different kind of knives, these four basic knives are "must haves" in your kitchen.



KITCHEN SHEARS

While this is not really a knife, kitchen shears are very handy for opening packages, cutting chicken, cutting herbs and a host of other tasks.



PARING KNIFE

A paring knife is a small knife with a plain edge blade that is used for peeling and other small jobs. Paring knives are usually 2½ to 4 inches long.



CHEF'S KNIFE

A chef's knife is also known as a cook's knife or French chef's knife. The chef's knife is an all-purpose knife that is curved to allow the cook to rock the knife on the cutting board for a precise cut. Chef's knives are usually between 6 and 12 inches—the longer the knife, the harder it is to control.



BREAD KNIFE

A bread knife has a serrated edge and is usually between 6 and 10 inches long. Bread knives are great for any soft food. The jagged serrated edge saws through food without tearing. It is good for cutting bread, sandwiches, tomatoes or other soft fruits and vegetables. It can be used as a carving knife if you do not have one.

You can add additional knives if you need them. However, you may find a set of knives with a knife block is a better buy than individual knives. Purchasing gourmet knives from specialty cooking stores can be very expensive and not necessary. You can find good quality knives at discount or department stores.







HOW TO USE A CHEF'S KNIFE

- Secure your cutting board by using a board with rubber feet or putting a damp towel under the board.
- Hold the chef's knife close to the blade. This will give you better control.
- Your other hand will hold the food with fingers curled under. Your little finger and thumb should be behind your other fingers. This reduces the risk of you cutting the hand that is holding the food.
- Use a rocking motion coming down on the food and pushing slightly forward. Your non-knife hand moves as you chop the food. Do not raise the tip of the knife off of the board.
- Practice makes perfect and speed will come. Go slow at first until you have the hang of it, then build up your speed.



Chop—
1/2" pieces



Dice—
1/4" pieces



Mince—
very small pieces



HOW TO KEEP YOUR KNIVES SHARP

- A knife that is not sharp is dangerous. It can slip off of the food and easily cut your fingers instead.
- Always use a cutting board—wood or plastic. Do not cut on hard surfaces such as tile or granite.
- A sharpening rod will help keep your knives sharp but will not actually sharpen your knives. If you already have a sharpening rod, use it frequently to keep your knives sharp. However, you will also want to invest in a knife sharpener. If you do not have a sharpening rod, a better investment is a knife sharpener.
- To sharpen your knives, you will need a sharpening stone or knife sharpener. A knife sharpener is easier and assures the proper angle of the blade. You can find an inexpensive knife sharpener at most discount stores.

Notes

KEEP IT Safe



HOW TO USE A FOOD THERMOMETER

Using the color of meat as a guide to doneness is not effective. Use an instant-read thermometer to make sure meats are the correct temperature. Digital instant-read thermometers are the most accurate and can be found in grocery stores or discount stores.

1. Use a digital instant-read thermometer to check the internal temperature toward the end of the cooking time, but before the food is expected to be done.
2. The food thermometer should be placed in the thickest part of the food and should not be touching bone, fat or gristle.
3. Compare your thermometer reading to the USDA Recommended Safe Minimum Internal Temperatures to determine if your food has reached a safe temperature.
4. Make sure to clean your food thermometer with soapy water before and after each use.

There are many types of food thermometers. Follow the instructions for your food thermometer.

USDA Recommended Safe Minimum Internal Temperatures

- Steaks and Roasts: 145 degrees F—higher for medium well or well done
- Ground Beef: 160 degrees F
- Chicken parts: 165 degrees F
- Whole poultry: 165 degrees F
- Pork: 160 degrees F
- Fish: 145 degrees F
- Egg dishes: 160 degrees F



CLEAN

- Wash hands and all equipment, counters, cutting boards, dishes and utensils with soapy water.
- Make sanitizing solution by mixing 1 tablespoon chlorine bleach to 1 gallon warm (not hot) water.
- Sanitize all kitchen surfaces after cleaning.

SEPARATE

- Keep meat separate from other foods when shopping.
- Use a separate cutting board for meats and vegetables. If you have only one cutting board, clean well with soapy water, then sanitize after using the board with meat.
- Always wash hands, cutting boards, and all utensils after coming in contact with raw meat, poultry or fish.

COOK

- Cook meats, poultry, eggs, fish and shellfish thoroughly.
- Reheat leftovers until steaming hot (165 degrees F).
- Bring sauces, soups and gravies to a boil when reheating.

CHILL

- Refrigerate foods quickly. Do not leave food out more than one hour if the temperature outside is 90 degrees F or hotter.
- Thaw meats on the bottom shelf on a plate in the refrigerator. Never thaw meats on the counter.
- Thawing food in the microwave is acceptable. Plan to cook it immediately after thawing because some areas of the food may become warm and begin to cook during microwave defrosting.

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