



the FRESH 20

ESSENTIAL KITCHEN TOOLS

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Food doesn't taste better because someone prepared it using a three hundred dollar appliance. The best food I've ever eaten has been from simple home kitchens prepared with very few utensils. I spent my college years cooking everything from Coq au Vin to brownies using only two tools: a wooden spoon and a dull chef's knife. That being said, as years passed, cooking became a more pleasant endeavor with the addition of a few basic utensils, and it will be easier to get weeknight dinners on the table with more help than a spoon and a knife. I share with you my list of life savers for cooking with ease and grace. And by ease and grace, I mean cutting a tomato without having to put your full body weight into the task.

THE KNIVES

Selecting knives can be overwhelming. The three most important factors to remember:

BLADE - for sturdiness, I prefer knives with blades running the entire length of the knife through the handle.

HANDLE - A good grip is crucial so consider the size and weight of the handle. Don't let the handle weigh down your hand. It should have a nice balance with the blade.

WEIGHT - It's not necessarily true that lighter is better. Too heavy and each cut is a burden, too light and you lose control over the blade and must put more force into the cutting.

Knife fanatics will defend their favorite brand but I use several brands to round out my collection. Shun is a favorite but a more economical option for home cooks is Wusthof. Choose the knife that suits YOU, but don't skimp on quality even if you can purchase just one, make it count.

01 8" CHEFS KNIFE

There is no single tool for cooking that you will rely on more than a sharp chef's knife. The classic chef's knife is the most essential tool in anyone's kitchen.

02 6" SERRATED KNIFE

This all purpose blade cuts through tomatoes like a charm while doing double duty on breads and tough skinned vegetables like squash.

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03 4" PARING KNIFE

The pointy tip of a slender paring knife helps get into tight spaces a larger chef's knife cannot touch. It's perfect for slicing into smaller fruits and vegetables such as garlic or strawberries.

POTS AND PANS

Other than happening to have a sous chef as your best friend, you can rely on pans to do most of the work in your kitchen. A good pan is hard to destroy and can last decades if treated with care (and washed quickly after cooking). A sizeable investment, I prefer to purchase pans a la carte, acquiring the real work-horse-like skillets and sauté pans, rather than settling for a set which usually comes with a few you might never touch. Keep your eye out for sales at home goods discount stores, online via eBay and brand websites looking to liquidate last year's models.

04 10"-12" SKILLET

The all-purpose pan. The difference between a skillet and a pan is the method of measurement and the weight. Skillets have slanted edges and are always measured in diameter across the top while sauté pan edges are straight and size is dictated by volume. Most of The Fresh 20 recipes call for a medium, 10-12" skillet. Invest in quality. I would rather have one good skillet than an entire set of pots and pans. Stainless steel All Clad makes light work of browning in my kitchen. For more recommendations, visit us at www.thefresh20.com

05 12 QUART STOCKPOT

There is a lot you can prepare with a sturdy stockpot. My kids think it is for popcorn, but my soups, pasta and corn know different. I prefer a heavy bottom, 18/10 stainless steel pot. Some come with useful steamer inserts. If you have an old copper pot from grandma, consider yourself lucky. They don't make them like the old days.

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06 2 QUART SAUTE PAN

This little pan makes for quick work in the kitchen. Use it to reheat rice, warm broth and even melt butter for popcorn! Stainless, oven proof, nonstick okay, long handle with a tight fitting lid.

07 DUTCH OVEN

There are few things more beautiful than an afternoon braise made in a good, quality Dutch oven. Heavy cast iron with enamel coating have excellent heat induction which can turn a simple cut of meat into an award winning braise. Le Creuset is hands down my favorite but there are several brands that make a good sturdy Dutch oven. Start with a 4-quart pot which is small enough to make dinner for four and big enough to squeeze in a whole chicken when needed.

BASICS

08 MEASURING SPOONS AND CUPS

Metal spoons last longer than plastic and are stronger by design. I have two sets of measuring cups, one for dry ingredients and one for liquid (these have a spout). Both contribute to my everyday cooking.

09 BAKING SHEET

Not just for cookies. It's easy to lay out recipe ingredients, roast vegetables, and more on a baking sheet. A 1 inch lipped half sheet pan works well as long as it fits entirely in your oven with the door fully closed. I often line mine with parchment paper to avoid labor intensive cleanup.

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10 MESH STRAINER OR COLANDER

I call this my Sunday tool. Once home from the market, I put in the sink to help when I scrub vegetables and wash fruit. A medium strainer large enough to hold two pounds of strawberries works well for many tasks.

11 FLEXIBLE CUTTING BOARD

I know many cooks that swear by their wooden boards but I enjoy the ability to move quickly in the kitchen. I often pick up the flexible boards and scrap the cut ingredients directly into the pot. Look for a color coordinated set to reduce the risk of cross contamination.

12 MELAMINE MIXING BOWLS

Glass and ceramic mixing bowls are fine, but I love my rubber bottomed, melamine bowls. I've had my bowls for a decade. Find bowls that have a rubber bottomed edge to reduce the counter slip factor. They should be deep for splatter control and wide enough to allow for whisking.

UTENSILS

13 TONGS

If you want to up-level your kitchen 'cred', buy tongs. Not only do they make you seem like you really know what you are doing in the kitchen, but they flip burgers, toss salads, turn shrimp, scrape browned bits and work as a serving tool at dinnertime. I use rubber tip tongs so my lovely pans do not scratch. Make sure they have a spring load for quick, one handed open and close.

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14 FLAT WOODEN SPATULA

The ultimate multi-tasker, this utensil is a tried and true friend in the kitchen. Round spoons can't get in the corners and metal spatulas are rough on cookware. My spatulas are well-worn. I wouldn't even consider making soup, stew or sautéed onions without my wooden friend.

15 SILICONE SPOON SPATULA

This tool is equally useful for sautéing vegetables as it is for stirring morning oatmeal. Mine have wooden handles and come in playful colors reminding me to always have fun in the kitchen.

16 VEGETABLE PEELER

My five year old is the official peeler of our household. He's tenacious about little spots and imperfections which if discovered, are quickly removed with a swipe of his peeler. Look for one with an excellent grip and a blade/mouth opening at least 3 inches wide. Oxo and Kitchen Aid both make respectable, durable peelers.

17 WHISK

For me, balloon whisks take up too much space in the utensil drawer. I prefer the versatility of a longer, thinner French whisk. I use it for egg beating, dressing, and homemade whipped cream. No matter which whisk you prefer, don't skimp on quality. A strong, stainless whisk with a round, solid handle will make for easy work.

18 KITCHEN SHEARS

I cut everything with kitchen shears; herbs, lettuce, pasta, even meat. Once you start using a kitchen shear, you will find thousands of tasks that require no knife. Keep a dedicated kitchen pair close by and away from art projects which will dull the shears.

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19 GRATER

An essential for the fresh kitchen, a stainless grater does more than grate Parmesan. Microplane is my go to brand for quality and durability. I get the most use out of a hand held grater with a 3" wide blade and a long removable handle. You can also use a box grater.

20 FOOD PROCESSOR

A food processor can make quick work of tough, hard foods like nuts and seeds and can quickly grind onions and garlic. When it comes to cooking for a crowd, there is no better tool to save you time.