

WHAT SHOULD I HAVE?

Think you need a fancy mixer, top-of-the-line cookware, and expensive knife sets to cook at home? Think again. Our grandmothers did plenty of cooking in kitchens stocked with a few essential items, and not much else. The experts at Relish Cooking Studio have put together a list of what we feel are the important essentials to outfitting your kitchen to last a lifetime.

1. Knives

Essentials: There are two knives that every kitchen needs: a good quality chef's knife and a paring knife.

What to look for:

Chef's Knife: at least an 8-inch blade, a fairly heavy weight, a full tang (the metal that connects the blade to the handle) that runs from the blade to the length of the handle and it should feel well-balanced when held.

Paring knife: look for a 1½-inch blade with a full tang. This knife should have a similar shape to the chef's knife.

Expert extras: Do not skimp or try to save money when buying a chef's knife. It's worth the investment because if you buy good quality, then you can keep them for a lifetime if you treat them right. Hand wash only and sharpen with a honing steel regularly. Have knives professionally sharpened when required.

Relish Recommends: Wüsthof

2. Cutting Board (or three)

Essentials: Every kitchen should have three cutting boards. The first is a really heavy duty one that you use for all of your vegetables and things. Then you have a thinner, lighter one that you can put on top of that for when you do your meat carving or poultry carving. Then you mark one side for meat and the other side for seafood, so you won't cross contaminate. You should never just flip your meat

cutting board over without properly cleaning it or you'll contaminate your base cutting board. The third board should be a light one, for cutting fruit.

Relish Recommends: Wüsthof or Epicurean Cutting Boards are a must have. Wusthof boards are made from scratch-resistant polyurethane while Epicurean are made from recycled cardboard and are safe. Maple wooden cutting boards such as **Michigan Maple** are the best for knives, however they do require a little extra care. They can only be hand-washed and allow to air dry. Wooden boards should be rubbed with a wood conditioner or beeswax to protect it from cracking. Both Epicurean and Michigan Maple boards will last for years so are very eco-friendly. Avoid glass or plastic boards, which will dull knives and in the case of plastic, will warp over time.

3. Pots and Pans

Avoid a thin non-stick version or aluminum, both of which leach stuff into your food and will generally be too thick to do anything other than boil water.

Essentials: Most kitchens only require four staples: a **sauté/frying (10-inch)** the size of your biggest burner -- for searing and high-heat cooking, a large **multipurpose stockpot (8 quart)** -- for both stovetop (to cook soups/pasta and steaming vegetables as well it will allow an even sauté of onions and other vegetables) and oven use, and a **sauce pan (3 ½ quart)** -- for boiling **eggs** and preparing smaller **portions** and finally a **cast iron skillet** for small or delicate jobs, like frying an egg, cooking fish or searing a single steak

Relish Recommends: Le Creuset, Scanpan, Lodge

What to look for in Stainless Steel Cookware

For maximum browning (and maximum flavor), you want stainless steel with an aluminum core (known as a clad pan) or an aluminum disk — both improve heat distribution. Look for a sauté pan with at least 3-inch

sides, which speed evaporation and keeps foods from steaming in their own juices. The cookware should have heavy bottom and handle that can under the broiler or in the oven. When buying a stockpot, it's important to get a larger size, but not so large that it will not fit in your oven. Keep in mind it is not necessary to buy an entire 8 or 10-piece set, but to purchase the individual pieces that best suit your needs.

While many manufacturers sell cookware in sets, it is our feeling that you should have a mixture of types of cookware and finishes. Here is our "*Perfect Cookware Collection*".

- 2 & 4 qt stainless steel saucepan
- 4 qt sauté pan
- non-stick fry pan
- Cast iron fry pan
- 12 qt stockpot or multipot
- Dutch Oven

4. Utensils

Start with a **large wooden spoon**. Add a **silicon heat-resistant spatula** is handy for cleaning out bowls and pots (helps to reduce food waste), a **vegetable peeler** and a **set of tongs**. Add a **microplane grater, whisks and ladles**.

5. Measures

Essentials: Many people have traditional glass measures, but a good set of measuring cups and measuring spoons are ideal. A really good set of sturdy measuring cups -- that go from 1/4 cup, 1/3 cup, 1/2 cup to full cup -- and they are made in a way that also specifies metric measurements

6. Instant Read Thermometer

Essentials: Chefs recommend using an instant-read thermometer so there's no room for error in knowing when foods are cooked.

What to look for: Keep things simple. The more gadgetry you have, the more chances are that things can break down. Buy a basic pocket thermometer

with a plastic protection case. All you have to do is stick it into the meat and wait for your reading..

7. Mixing / Nesting Bowls

Essentials: You will need at least one bowl to mix things in. Consider buying a set of different-sized bowls that "nest" into one another. You'll have multiple options without taking up too much space. Glass or stainless steel are your best investment; avoid plastic as you won't want to put anything hot into them and they may stain. You can use them for mixing baking ingredients, creating sauces, tossing salads.. anything.

What to look for: Glass bowls don't take up space or maintain odour, they actually quite inexpensive, and they come in all different sizes and they stack nicely. Buy one very large bowl for mixing things such as salads, and then getting two medium-sized bowls as well as a couple of smaller ones.

8. Colander

A colander ensures you don't burn yourself trying to drain pasta or while making stock, plus you use it to wash fresh produce or as a fruit bowl for the table. A spider (a mesh strainer with a handle) is handy for removing vegetables from water instead of straining so that you can preserve the water.

9. Casserole Dish

Essentials: Have casserole dishes on hand for slow cooking, one-pot meals and dishes such as gratins or scalloped potatoes.

What to look for: For casserole dishes, look for thick porcelain, Pyrex glassware or enameled iron materials. Make sure the dish comes with a tight-fitting lid.

Expert extras: What I really like about them is that you can actually prepare a dish in them, you stick it in the oven... you take it out and you can serve straight from the dish because it looks so good.

Relish Recommends: Le Creuset or Emile Henry

10. Immersion / Hand Blender

Essentials: While blenders and food processors serve different purposes, and as long as you are not doing heavy duty cooking such as making pasta dough, a hand blender is most likely all a home chef needs. A hand blender can do everything that a blender can do. Plus, it's more versatile. You can stick it right into a pot of hot liquid so you don't have to pour something into the blender and worry about spilling anything.

What to look for: Some features to look for are a durable steel blade, multiple speed options and a blender that detaches from the motor for easy cleaning. Many hand blenders also come with extras, such as choppers and whisks for added value. Before purchasing a hand blender with these additional features consider the type of cooking you do and if the bonuses will be useful or just additional kitchen clutter.

A Few Extras

Some other kitchen essentials you may want to have on hand are:

- heavy-duty aluminum or steel baking pans/cookie sheets for baking and for using to set things on in the oven, such as your stock pot.
- Can opener. Go a step up and get a heavier one that works and won't destroy a can or leave dangerously sharp edges.
- Oven mitts. You will need a decent pair if you use an oven regularly. Check heat resistance; anything less than 400F isn't worth buying. You can use an oven mitt as a trivet too
- Storage containers for leftovers. Keep glass or plastic on hand for storing foods you buy in bulk such as flour, sugar, oatmeal etc.

FROM THE KITCHENS OF



OUR GUIDE TO CHOOSING

THE TOP 10 KITCHEN ESSENTIALS FOR YOUR KITCHEN

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