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nara LEST SrRynveN

Rees The Essential Guide to Knife Care

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Ns are kitchen workhorses, and tts important to keep them sharp. But what does j| that mean! How do you accomplish it? What should you not believe? ey mou sinneaum = : OQUR FAVORITE KNIVES fs

« =ea ELE Understanding Degrees of Dullness

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; Chefs Keke GS ee rei etree feels only a litte dull probably does ,

e This lightweight knife can outperform heavier, dull knife is usually Leia

more expensive blades. Its pronounced curve gives it great maneuverability,

needs to be repositioned with a honing

steel. A truly dull knife has an edge that is rounded and worn down and needs a sharp- ener to restore the standard Western 20- to 22-degree angle of each side of the edge.

. Wiisthof Classic

f 10-Inch Bread Knife (\$109.95)

| | The uniformly spaced, moderately sized

pointed serrations on this knife excelled at slicing through food quickly and easily.

Y 7 SLIGHTLY DULL VERY DULL i Wisthof Classic with PEtec A sharp knife holds a 20-degree The misaligned edge of a slightly Avery dull, worn-down knife needs angle on each side of the edge. dull knife Is easily fixed with a steel. a sharpener to restore the edge.

: 3'2-Inch Paring Knife (\$39.95)

Vy This knife is nimble and precise with Its thin, slightly curved blade, pointed tip, and comfortable grip. How to Tell If Your Knife Is Sharp In the test kitchen, we use a

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; fare Sn ae rue Game) | very simple test to see if knives

need to be honed or sharpened: | Victorinox Fibrox the paper test. Hold a sheet of 12-Inch Granton Edge Slicing Knife (\$39.95) paper by one end and drag your r This knife has a tapered |2-inch blade with knife, from heel to tip, across it.

{ scallops that help prevent sticking, It's perfect If the knife snags or fails to cut

, for slicing large cuts of meat. the paper, it needs to be honed ( ———— or sharpened. Try honing first. If ; mite Lr RA, the knife still fails the test, run it LS through a sharpener.

i Masamoto VG-10 Gyutou (\$180)

' This hybrid knife has a slim, sharp tip and an

i acutely tapered blade, which makes it feel GOOD OPTIONS FOR KK ,

If you store your knives loose in a drawer, you're putting the sharp

especially light as well as slightly flexible. edge of your blades—not to mention your fingers—in danger.

Keeping Knives Clean We recommend cleaning knives with a sponge, hot water, and soap. Scrub pads do a fine job of

ing gunk from blades but can eventual Magnetic Knife Strip ns ae finish. Avoid a dishwasher: The f Knife Guard The Messermeister Bamboo Universal Knife Block knocking around can damage the edges, as can The Victorinox 8- to 10-Inch Knife Magnet (\$69.99) is asep The Bodum Bistro Universal the corrosive nature of dishwasher detergent. BladeSafe Knife Guard wall-mounted magnetic knife strip puts Les (\$49.95) boasts a If you have a carbon steel knife, we likewise (\$5.95) is a wide polypropyl- that offers ample room to store slotiess” frame filled with a nest ‘commend a sponge, hot water, and soap— ene case that securely covers knives without demanding drawer of plastic rods to accommodate Pbe sure to dry it or it will rust and blacken. a variety of chef's, slicing, and or counter space. It can accommo- any arsenal of cutlery and holds date even the longest knives... knives in a compact footprint.

paring knives.

COOK'S ILLUSTRATED

16 ILLUSTRATION: JOHN BURGOYNE

## DON'T BELIEVE THESE COMMON SHARPENING MYTHS ———

MAG Honing steels sharpen

your knives

TRUTH: These rods merely straighten the cutting edge.

As a knife is used, the cutting edge tends to bend and fold over slightly, giving the perception of a less sharp knife. Running the edge of a knife across a steel straightens the edge, making the knife perform better. A knife sharpener, on the other hand, actually removes metal from the blade's edge, creating a new surface

for cutting.

For a truly sharp knife,

you need to use a whetstone.

TRUTH: A whetstone is just one way to return a factory edge to a knife. A sharpening stone, or whetstone, is an abrasive block that removes metal from a knife's blade to re-create its sharp edge.

If you know how to use It, a whetstone can be a very effective tool. However, using one is a specialized skill that takes a good deal of time

practice to do properly. And I don't know how to use

yO!

a whetstone, it can do more harm

than good

YTH [fseemr sharpeners take off too much metal.

TRUTH: With the right brand of electric sharpener, there's no need to worry about excessive metal loss. Electric sharpeners

do take off a small amount of metal each time you grind your knife—especially if you are using a coarse-grind setting to sharpen an especially dull knife. But our favorite electric sharpener has three options for sharpening: coarse, fine, and a nonmotorized steel. The fine slot is the one you will use most often just to polish up a barely dull knife. Because you will be maintaining the sharpness of your knife with the lightest of the sharpening options rather than giving it an intense regrinding with the coarse slot, you shouldn't worry about metal loss.

MA @liaid For that matter, honing

steels can take off too much metal.

TRUTH: Again, with the right tool, metal loss is nothing to worry about. The three types of steels on the market—regular, fine, and polished cut—all accomplish the same task to a lesser or greater degree. The rough, filed lines of the regular-cut steel are best for home cooks who only occasionally steel the edge of a knife. For professional chefs and meat cutters who use their knives for hours on end (and steel them multiple times per day), the fine and polished cuts are a better choice, as constant contact with the rougher surface of a regular-cut steel could wear away their knives' edges.

WP @ially Electric sharpeners

are better than manual ones.

TRUTH: A good manual sharpener can be as effective as an electric model. When we pitted our favorite electric sharpener against our top manual model, we found that the manual sharpener was every bit as good as the electric one when it came to restoring a worn blade. Nicked or badly damaged knives were another story. Manual sharpeners take off less metal than electric ones and simply can't remove enough, in a reasonable amount of time, to restore

a proper edge to really damaged blades. In such cases, an electric sharpener is the better choice.

LAR Auilal) You can't sharpen

a serrated knife at home.

TRUTH: You can—but only with a manual sharpener. Though serrated-specific sharpeners do exist, we've found them to be disappointing. And electric sharpeners don't do enough: Their spinning wheels sharpen merely the edges and tips of the serrations, not the valleys between these tips. But

that doesn't mean you need to send out your serrated knives to a professional. Our favorite manual sharpener uses a V-shaped tungsten

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carbide blade that can ride up and down the serrations, sharpening not only the edges and tips but also the deep valleys. (Serrated edges don't need to be sharpened nearly as often as smooth blades: Their pointed teeth do most of the work while the edges endure less friction.)

MP @Baiy You can't sharpen an

Asian knife in a Western sharpener.

TRUTH: It's not ideal, but you can sharpen an Asian knife in a Western sharpener. Asian knives have a 15-degree cutting angle on one or both sides of the blade, while European knives use a 20-degree angle. But this doesn't mean that you can't use your regular sharpener on them. We dulled one of our favorite Japanese chef's knives and then sharpened it in our favorite electric sharpener, which creates a 20-degree angle, and compared it with the same type of knife dulled and then sharpened in an Asian sharpener. The good news: Both the 15- and 20-degree edges were sharp enough to slice a tomato effortlessly. Only a few testers noticed some drag with the 20-degree

angle that wasn't there with the 15-degree blade. So in a pinch, you could just use a good Western knife sharpener—it's always better than a dull knife. Your best bet is to use our recommended Asian sharpener.

LAA AUMA! And you can't sharpen a Western knife in an Asian sharpener.

TRUTH: You can—but we

don't recommend it. The metal and geometry of a 20-degree Western knife are not designed

to be at 15 degrees. When our favorite Western chef's knife was sharpened to an Asian edge, most testers enjoyed more precision with the blade. That said, sharpening a 20-degree angle to 15 degrees will likely require frequent resharpening, which will rapidly wear down your blade. If your knife didn't cost a lot, replacing it might be OK. But with expensive knives, it's best to maintain the original edge.

#### OUR RECOMMENDED SHARPENERS —

Electric The Chef's Choice Model 130

(\$139.99) creates a sharp, polished

edge on knives. Its spring-loaded blade

guides allow no ambiguous wiggle room as they hold the blade against the sharpening wheels at the proper angle. One slot acts like a honing steel but removes all the guesswork.

Bolster Blues If you have a knife with a full bolster, we don't recommend using an electric sharpener; The thick end of the blade can't be run the way through. Instead, use a manual sharpener.

Manual

The AccuSharp Knife and Tool Sharpener (\$7.99) makes admirably quick and thorough work of basic sharpening tasks at a fraction of the price of an electric sharpener.

Asian

The Chef's Choice Diamond Hone Asian Knife Sharpener Model 463 (\$39.99) is an economical manual sharpener that uses diamond abrasives in two stages: coarse and fine. It efficiently restored a crisp, smooth, 15-degree angle on a completely dull knife. Note: This model can handle only double-beveled knives, such as hybrid gyutous, which are sharpened on both sides of the blade (traditional Japanese knives are single-beveled).

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