

Title:

What do you really need in cookware and crockery

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Summary:

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Article Body:

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So what are the real "cookware essentials", the things that you really can't do without? Well surprisingly you actually need only a very small amount of things to get you going. Probably considerably less than you have already.

All the cookware you actually need is a good knife, a means of sharpening it, a chopping board and a couple of pans. You may prefer a bit more cookware but you can cook with just that.

Don't get me wrong, I'm as partial to a kitchen full of mixers, blenders, electrical appliances and assorted useful, and otherwise, gadgets as the next person.

But although good quality cheap cookware (yes it is possible)like grinders and blenders give you a lot more scope there are plenty of things that you can cook without them, but a good knife, or three, is absolutely essential.

The first and most essential piece of cookware you need is a cook's knife, that's as large as you feel comfortable with, an 8 inch knife with a blade that curves slightly to allow a rocking motion is a good start, then a smaller knife, about 4 inches, for cutting small vegetables and a carving knife.

If you buy one about 10 inches long it can also double as a bread knife.

Although there is no point buying extra knives just to line the pockets of the large kitchen equipment manufacturers. A set can actually be quite good value

and give you more for a similar amount of money. But check carefully what is in the set first.

If you cannot find a set with what you think will be useful to you, don't buy it. Many sets come with extras like a case or wooden knife block but try to see past the free gifts. It's much better to have a few good knives in your drawer than a fancy polished beech wood block with fifteen designer knives, fourteen of which you never use, and one that is not the right shape for your hand and gives you blisters.

I have a small, not very expensive set of French Sabatiers that are comfortable but not as posh looking as some of the more fashionable makes like the Japanese globals which I find too light which makes chopping a lot of vegetables for example much harder work.

If you learn how to use them properly then steel or grinding stone is a good way to keep your knives sharp otherwise there are a good choice of proprietary sharpeners that keep the knife at the right angle while you pull it through the sharpener. Pans also need to be good quality, nothing over the top, no need to spend a fortune. Just make sure they are of a good solid construction.

This promotes good even heat distribution and helps to prevent things burning. Stainless steel is a good option. A good wok on the other hand should be made of a thin light steel and cost very little, but always check that it has a good well-fixed wooden handle. The best place to buy this most useful of pans is (perhaps unsurprisingly) usually the local Chinese supermarket. A good chopping board is another necessity though two are better than one as this helps to prevent cross contamination if you designate one for uncooked meats/fish etc. and another for things like fruit and salads.

No matter how much you think you will always be careful and wash them between uses this is the best single way to prevent contamination between foods. Mixers can be useful if you intend doing a lot of baking. But unless you make bread on a regular basis (always a good idea), then buying a simple, good quality hand held mixer rather than a heavy standalone version could save you a couple of hundred dollars in as well as a lot of space on your worktop.

A blender is always useful for soups and the occasional smoothie, and a grinder will give you a lot more options in your use of nuts etc. and will also provide a constant supply of fresh coffee for the more manic cook. A good way to combine the functions of all three is to buy a food processor.

A good quality machine such as a Moulinex or Robot coupe will save space and allow you to buy a much better processor than if you bought their items separately. There is an almost unending list of kitchen equipment that you could buy (if in doubt walk into your local cookery shop and ask the owner what he thinks you need!), but make sure you get the essential good quality cookware right and it will make your cooking easier and more enjoyable.

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