



THE DINING DIVA KITCHEN ESSENTIALS

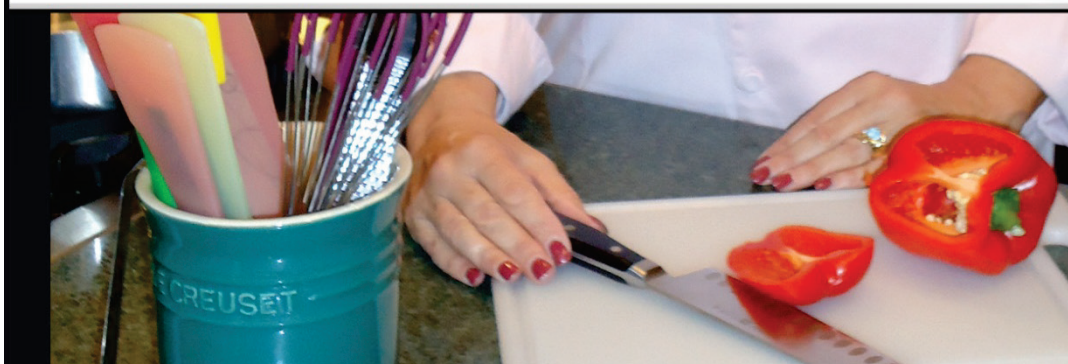
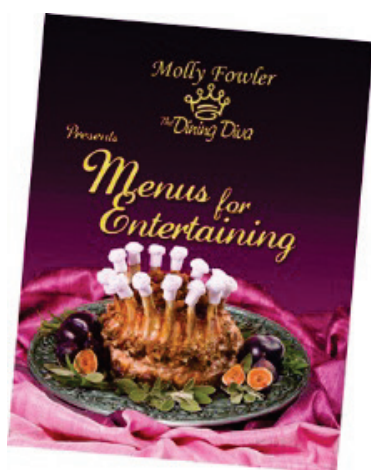


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This gorgeous cookbook is Molly's first. The book includes color photos of each meal in a beautiful place setting, and a photo of each individual recipe. Tips, FYI's and "How To's" are featured throughout, with a Shopping List and a Culinary Countdown to ease preparation time in the kitchen. Enjoy this book and be a guest at your own fabulous party! 176 pages, lay-flat binding, 8.5" x 11"; with food photography by Mike

Bowlin. [Click Here](#) to order your copy. We will mail it to you.

That Legal Stuff:

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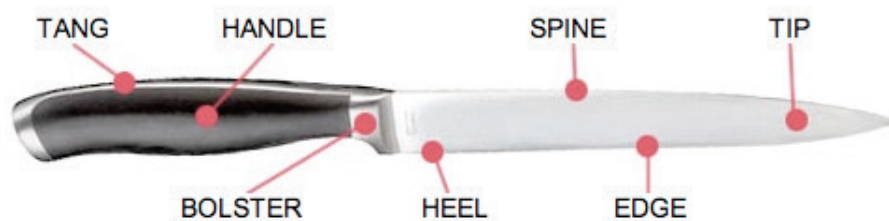
The Dining Diva's Favorite Kitchen Essentials

Shopping for the in-home gourmet is mind-boggling! There are so many wonderful appliances, cookware, tools, and gadgets – with more debuting in the market every day. It is easy to get caught up in “the perfect item for every task” marketing strategy. My husband has often remarked that I am on a mission to be the woman with the most kitchen gadgets! I suppose I am “guilty as charged”. As much as I love my gadgets, there are some essentials in the kitchen that are worthy of investment... these are the things I simply couldn't do without. By no means is this the complete list for everyone. Perhaps it will serve as a reference or will encourage you to closely examine how you cook and what you really need to be a better or more efficient cook. This is the first of five “essentials”!

Knives

Every cook should have good, sharp, knives. Notice that I said “every cook”, not “every kitchen”. A man with large hands may prefer a very different type of knife than a petite woman. Shop accordingly.

Anatomy of a knife



What qualifies as a good knife?

First, you need to know the anatomy of a knife. The four primary parts: the blade (comprised of the spine, tip, edge and the heel), the tang, the bolster, and the handle.

- **The blade**

The blade can be made of stainless steel, carbon steel, high-carbon steel, or ceramic. Each has different properties. The stainless blades are the least expensive, but once dulled, they cannot be satisfactorily sharpened to retain a good, sharp edge. Carbon steel blades are good, although they often discolor, actually turning black. They do sharpen easily, however. A premium blade is made of high-carbon steel. Metal blades can be stamped (actually cut out of a sheet of metal), or forged (a molded blade). The latter is the most desirable, resulting in a long-lasting knife with good weight. Ceramic blades certainly have their place in the kitchen. They retain their sharpness longer than any other type, but cannot be sharpened at home. Also, they may break because the blade has no flexibility. Ceramic knives are wonderfully sharp and are great for slicing vegetables and mincing herbs.

- **The tang**

The tang is the part of the blade that extends back into the handle. Knives that are full-tang feature a blade and tang made from one piece of metal extending to the back of the handle. This design results in a more expensive knife, but it will hold up well.

- **The bolster**

The bolster is the thick “ridge” of metal in forged knives between the blade and the handle. This is helpful in establishing a firm grip on the knife for maximum control.

- **The handle**

The composition of the handle is more about preference. Handles can be made of wood, metal, plastic, or rubber. The handle can be glued, molded or riveted to the blade. Riveting is usually preferred and is thought to be the strongest option. When choosing a knife, its handle should feel good to your grip, and the knife must be well-balanced. Handle selection is a very personal decision.

In summary, the bulk of my knives are high-carbon steel, full-tang, forged blades with riveted handles. Brand name is less important to me; the “feel” is everything!

Which knives do you need?

Unless you have money to burn, or just like the look, I will steer you away from buying elaborate cutlery sets. These purchases usually result in knives and extra pieces you do not need in your day-to-day cooking. For me, the essential knives are a chef’s knife, a *Santoku* or utility knife, a paring knife, and a serrated knife. It is also advisable to have a steel to frequently hone the edges of your knives.

- **Chef’s knife**

This is the work-horse in the kitchen. Its elongated, wedge-shaped blade (in 8, 10, or 12-inch size) makes it ideal for chopping, dicing, and mincing. Choose the blade length that feels best and most manageable, to you.



- **Santoku or a basic utility knife**

I love my [Santoku](#) knife! It originated in Japan, and typically has a blade 5-8 inches long. It is distinguished in appearance from the chef's knife by its "sheep's foot"-shaped blade. The rounded front of the blade creates more of a linear edge



for cutting; you will have less rocking motion. The word *santoku* means "three virtues" - *slicing*, *dicing*, and *mincing* are its best uses. It has a lighter, thinner blade that maintains a very sharp edge, and is ideal for slicing vegetables. I prefer the type with the Granton edge (the little scalloped hollows along the cutting edge). This is designed to trap a bit of air between the blade and the food being sliced to allow for easier release. Though forged and full-tang, you will rarely find a Santoku knife with a bolster. If you don't care for a Santoku-style knife,

a basic utility knife with a thin 6-inch blade will do a nice job for slicing fruits, cheeses, desserts, and other soft foods.

- **Paring knife**

A 3-inch or 4-inch paring knife is the choice for peeling fruits and vegetables as well as cutting other small foods. I use a paring knife for cutting lemon wedges, and apples, for example. I have it both a high-carbon steel blade and ceramic version -- I love them both. When using the ceramic blade, take care not to cut into a hard pit (as in a peach). Avoid using a paring knife to pry a slice away from a pit because the blade can chip. If you need to be practical, opt for the high-carbon steel blade.



- **Serrated knife**



The serrated (saw-like) blade is used to cut through foods with tough exteriors, and soft interiors. This is the knife to use for slicing bread, bagels, angel food cakes, tomatoes, and eggplants. Use in a sawing-type motion, applying equal pressure as you slice forward and back. Depending on the type of serrated edge, this type of knife can also be used to slice cooked meats. To sharpen, **you must use a sharpener made especially for serrated blades!**

How do you properly care for and store your knives?

Protect your investment! Your knives will last a lifetime if you take the necessary steps to care for them correctly. Develop proper habits from the beginning. To be sure the knife is sharp and ready to go, use your steel to hone the knife before you begin cutting.

This does not apply to serrated knives! The steel does not sharpen the blade; it realigns the edge that tends to roll to one side after extended use.

- **Care**

Wash your knives in hot soapy water; dry thoroughly between each use and before storing. Be sure to thoroughly clean the handle as well as the blade. To prevent cross-contamination, wipe down the entire knife with a sanitizing solution ($\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon bleach in 1 quart of water). **Do not clean knives in a dishwasher.** Wooden handles may warp, and blades can be damaged from jostling and extreme temperatures. The edges may also cut the coating of the dish racks and cause rust to form.

- **Storage**

Knives should not be stored loose and unprotected in a drawer. Not only is this dangerous for anyone reaching into the drawer, but the knives can be damaged from other tools nicking their blades. If a drawer is your only option, purchase individual plastic sheaths to cover the blades. There are also wooden knife blocks that are made for drawers. The classic wooden knife block is pretty, but is less sanitary than steel or rubber holders. The wood is porous and can harbor bacteria. Slotted hangers should be mounted on a wall (rather than on the edge of an island or butcher block) to prevent a safety hazard. My favorite is a magnetized bar mounted on the wall. They allow for easy knife selection, and make it possible to store them within reach.

Stay tuned for more Essentials! As soon as they are published, you will receive a new copy of this eBook.