

LIFESTYLE

Summary

Meal preparation is a breeze if you begin with these four types of knives and know how to care for them properly.

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Make cooking easier with the right knives

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How many knives do I really need?

According to the chef Jean-Christophe Novelli, you only need three: a small paring knife, a large meat cleaver and an elegant carving knife for special occasions. Many people would add a serrated bread knife to this list, so foodies generally agree that four is the magic number.

If you want to avoid washing up every five minutes, buy two of each. It's better to invest in a small number of top quality, useful knives than a lot of cheaper knives that can all perform similar tasks and won't last as long.

What kind of knife blade is best?

There are pros and cons with each type of blade. For example, stainless steel blades are affordable but can't ever be sharpened back to their original condition once they lose their edge.

Carbon steel blades will remain sharper for longer than standard stainless steel ones, but will discolour over time and are more susceptible to rust. High-carbon steel blades remain sharp for a long time, too, and won't discolour, but they're pricey.

Ceramic blades stay the sharpest for the longest, but they're fragile and easy to break. Look out for non-stick coated blades or those that have slight indentations in them to prevent sliced food from sticking as you cut.



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What about handles?

Make sure to try before you buy whenever possible to find the most comfortable handle for your grip.

Knives with wooden handles look stylish but will warp over time even if you hand wash them. Plastic handles are hygienic because they don't absorb water, but can become brittle and crack, and some people find that plastic handles are too light to use

comfortably.

Knives that are made of one piece of metal with no separate handle (known as full-tang knives) are the most durable, but can be heavy to use. Some manufacturers, especially Japanese brands, now give full-tang knives hollow handles to make them lighter and easier to use.

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