



FROM SPICES TO SAUTE PAN

**HOW TO SET UP YOUR KITCHEN
TO PROMOTE YOUR HEALTH**

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“How to Set-up Your Kitchen, from Spices to Saute Pan”

The most important thing that you need in a kitchen is a proper set-up or as the French say, “Mise en Place”. A good set-up will save you time, effort and frustration every time!

In a professional restaurant, all decisions, right from the design to the daily equipment set-up is dictated by the menu, period. Now that makes perfect sense that if you are a steak house type restaurant, that you’d have a great set-up to process and cook meats on the grill as opposed to setting up the kitchen with pizza ovens.

But in a home, it’s a bit different, you don’t have a main menu that you base your design and set-up by, or do you?

In going back to the professional kitchen model of setting up around your menu, it’s not just the individual items on the menu that I’m talking about, but the cooking methods and techniques that are involved in preparing those individual menu items where you have what I call your strong cooking suits and your non-existent cooking suits, and various cooking strengths in-between. So setting up your kitchen to your stronger and strongest suits make perfect sense to setting up for your weaker cooking suits.

Now all of this is common sense once it’s been explained, but let me show you what happens when we are in the real world. Most of the cooking methods, techniques and functions are not set-up to save you time, effort and therefore frustrate you every time you cook.

So bottom line, the cooking methods you use most must be the ones set-up closer to your work space in the kitchen. If you saute, pan grill or roast like I do, have your pans, utensils, cutting boards and knives surrounding the area that you work in the kitchen. I bake on occasion, but not often enough to have the free standing mixer on the counter or even in a cabinet close by my work station. I have it stored on the top shelf of my walk-in pantry. So when I am in the mood to bake, I know where it is, but keep it out of my way on a regular basis.

The next couple of pages will outline what I consider essentials to have in a home kitchen for the average home cook. The list of essentials may not mention your favorites, that is for you to determine, it is my expert opinion only what is needed in every home kitchen set-up (so don’t fret if you don’t see your favorite garlic press or egg separator tool, it’s your kitchen to do as you please!)

I look at kitchen equipment essentials as items that are either supply a superior food end result or are multi-use type equipment. Super specialized equipment (like egg separators) take up kitchen storage space and defeats the purpose of a proper “mise en place”. So as much as I love a good waffle like the next guy, I’m not going to have my electric waffle iron stored on my kitchen counter, or even in my pantry, that’s a once in 3 month brunch tool that’s stored in the garage!

So take the following kitchen tool essentials as it is, one experts opinion based on what he thinks you’ll be needing to create your meals in an easy, time saving, less frustrated way. So enjoy!

Knife Essentials:

- **Chef's knife (8-10" long)** Personally, I use a Chinese cleaver instead, I like the multi-task usage of this knife, vegetable chopper, meat cutter, meat mallet, but it's not for everyone.
- **Paring or utility knife** - I supply these 3" utility knives when we conduct our team building programs that are great. It's the most used knife in my home kitchen. Very versatile as a paring knife, boning knife, slicer, cheese slicer, vegetable slicer.
- **Serrated knife**- It's a knife that when needed, is indispensable. Obviously it's great for bread, but it's also great for anything that is baked dough or bread like or anything that is delicate to slice and needs a "sawing" action to cut through it.
- **Vegetable Peeler** - I like the serrated, stainless steel, swivel peeler.
- **Sharpening steel** - Get a real sharpening steel, made from steel, not ceramic. Most home kitchens either don't have a steel or don't use a steel. It's a must to keep your knife "edges" straight and honed. A sharp knife saves work time and effort!

That's it! You can buy more specialty knives if you want. But if I were to set up a friends kitchen, I'd focus on those five tools only.

Small Tools and Utensils:

- **10-12" Wooden Spoons** - These are cheap, so stock up on them.
- **10" Wire Whisk** - I prefer the wooden handled whisks with medium to thin wire.
- **10" Kitchen spoons**, slotted and solid - get plenty of these to stock your kitchen.
- **10" Rubber Spatular** - 2 should be enough
- **1 Potato masher** - Yes, great for mashed potatoes, but also for making other mashed vegetable items quickly.
- **4 Sided Box Grater** - I'm a big micro-plane grater fan, but if I had one grater in the kitchen, it would be this. It's great for grating cheese (two sizes), ginger, citrus & more.
- **Instant Read Thermometer** - Don't waste your money on the electric version, the simple, instant read thermometers are great for checking the internal temperature of roasted

Pots & Pans Essentials:

- **12" Pre-seasoned Cast-iron Skillet * *** with cover. This is the best gift that my Mom ever gave to me and I told her so! (besides the gift of life, of course!) If I only had one pan to take with me, it would be this or my next item. Great for pan grilling, searing, stewing, braising and baking. I make a mean corn bread in cast iron skillets. The main attribute to these pans is that they retain their heat longer and uniformly.
- **14" Steel Wok pan with cover** - Along with the Chinese cleaver, it's the best multitasked kitchen tool you could own. Of course you can stir fry in a wok, but it also perfect for deep frying (while using less oil than a traditional pan), stove top braising, steaming & pan grilling.
- **Non-stick, Teflon lined saute pans**, 6" for frying eggs and omelets, 12" for other saute items.
- **Sauce pans**, 3 qt. & 6 qt size with covers
- **Roasting pan with deep sides** - can be used for roasting as well as braising. I like the rectangular shape of the pan to fit more pieces of meat or poultry. Also great for roasting long roasted (that give off much fat) items.
- **Sheet pans** - great for roasting, toasting & baking. I use these more than a roasting pan for roasting leaner cuts of meat for better caramelization of the exterior of the roast.
- **Stainless Steel Bowl Assortment** - I like having three sizes, small 2-4 quart, medium 6-7 quart, and large 9 quart. Have 2-3 of each size or more of the size you use the most.
- **Salad Spinner** - I know, it seems like it's a *non-essential*, but from the consistent amount of salads that my family eats, it's an every day essential tool for us.
- **Cutting Boards** - I am partial to wood cutting boards but the plastic ones are more abundant to find. I like having at least one very large cutting board and a few smaller cutting boards. I also am a big proponent of using the "Cut & Toss" disposable cutting boards to prevent

Small Tools and Utensils cont.

- meats as well as checking the inner temperature of cooling items that are “batch cooked”
- **Kitchen Tongs**, 6”, 10” and 12” (for BBQ) - the spring loaded are best so you don’t have to struggle with keeping them open.
- **Ice Cream Scoop** - Not just a single use item, great for ice cream but even better for exact portioning of food items like doughs, mixtures (crab cakes), etc... Get at least a #8 scoop and one more smaller size scoop like a #12 scoop.
- **Meat Mallet** - Besides making chicken, pork and veal into thin cutlets and scallopini, it can be used for making a quick batch of cracker or dry bread crumbs or crushed ice.
- **Soup Ladles** - Begin with one larger sized (12 oz) to a more standard size (8 oz.)
- **Fine Strainer** - one small and one large. The larger for straining stocks, sauces but also great for sifting flour. The smaller size can do the same with the addition of sifting cocoa and powdered sugar for desserts.
- **Baking Brush** - Used for brushing egg wash or glaze on pastry, or marinade on meats.
- **Hand Can Opener** - I’ve never owned an electric can opener, the hand operated are more versatile and fit in a small drawer.
- **12-14” Rolling Pin** - The wooden versions as good for me, sure the marble ones are cool but, once again, it’s uses are limited. I am okay with the ball bearing type rolling pins or the rolling sticks. In a pinch, you can use a rolling pin as a meat mallet too!
- **Kitchen timers** - I usually like the low tech type and I usually have two, one for each oven. It’s definitely an essential tool when you keep going through toasted almonds or coconut from burning them!
- **Waiter’s Cork Screw** - I should have put this at the top of the list of essentials ☺. I prefer the waiter’s cork screw type because of it’s versatility in opening wines and the less space it takes up.
- **Funnel** - It’s a sometimes the simple tools that stop us dead in our tracks when we don’t have them.
- **Set of measuring spoons and cups**

Pot & Pan Essentials, cont.

- cross contamination between cooked and raw meats, or raw meats and raw vegetables. It’s worth the additional expense to have them in the kitchen.

Power Equipment:

- **High Powered Blender** - my favorite is the Vita-mix Blender which is fairly expensive but it does short work of soups, sauces, frappe, mixes, blended drinks, etc... A very good stand-in for the Vita-mix is the Bullet brand of mixers and food processor in one.
- **Size Adjustable Toaster** - For years, I fought the need to have a power tool that had only one function, to toast. But after years of dealing with toaster ovens or heating up the kitchen for one piece of toast, I now am a believer and totally enjoy my toaster.
- **Electric Hand Mixer** - I never owned a set until I met my wife who uses it all the time. I would use my heavy duty stand mixer to do all the jobs that she would use with a hand mixer, but her method is easier to use, clean up and store and for those reasons, it rates much higher as an essential kitchen tool.
- **Immersion Hand Blender** - Great to puree small amounts of soup, sauce, shakes, etc... Easy to clean, takes up a small amount of room to store rates this high on my list. In fact, if room was too tight, I’d opt for this over my Vita-mix Blender.

Optional Power Equipment: (not quite essential)

- **Food Processors** - Check out the Bullet Brand combo blender, juicer and processor.
- **Rice Cooker** - Not just for rice, it’s great for other types of grains too.
- **Standing Mixer** - Unless you bake a lot, it takes up space allotted for more essentials.

Essentials List of Pantry Items to Have On Hand:

Obviously, we can have more than the items listed below, but to give you the most versatility and variety without over ordering and having too much food on hand, this list will cover the bases well. Remember this is my list of essentials, it's used only as a guideline as if a friend ask me to set up their pantry for them. A good example is the dry herb list of only six herbs, obviously, you can purchase more herbs for yourself, but I find that it's best to start with these herbs and buy as you need them to keep them freshest.

Six Essential Dry Herbs:

- Bay leaves
- Whole Thyme
- Whole Tarragon
- Whole Oregano
- Rosemary
- Dill

Six Essential Spices:

- Paprika (smoked)
- Chili Powder
- Madras Curry Powder
- Black Pepper
- Cinnamon
- Allspice

Other Essential Flavorings:

- Kosher Salt
- Tabasco
- Mexican Cholula or Tapatio Hot Sauce
- Worcestershire
- Braggs Amino Sauce
- Soy Sauce
- Hoisin Sauce
- Vietnamese Sriracha Hot Chile Sauce
- Sherry wine
- Brandy
- Wine & Red wine
- Ketchup
- Mustard, Dijon
- Maple Syrup

Miscellaneous Pantry Essentials:

- Canned Chopped Tomatoes
- Canned Tomato Paste
- Kalamata Olives
- Powdered Milk - Great for baking when out!

Pasta, Rice & Beans:

- Penne or Elbow Macaroni
- Lasagna
- Spaghetti
- Thai Jasmine Rice - long grain
- Cal-Rose or Arborio Rice - short grain
- Brown Rice - long or short grain
- Dried Beans (two types)
- Lentils
- Whole Grains (Barley, Bulgar, etc...)
- Couscous

Oils & Vinegars:

- Olive Oil (for cooking)
- Extra Virgin Olive Oil (for flavoring and salads)
- Avocado oil (for cooking)
- Sesame Oil
- Apple Cider Vinegar
- Balsamic Vinegar, Rice Wine Vinegar and
- Red Wine Vinegar

Miscellaneous Pantry Essentials:

- Panko Bread Crumbs
- Canned Tuna and/or Salmon
- Capers
- Dry Mushrooms (shiitake, porcini)
- Clam Juice
- Sudried Tomatoes
- Corn Starch
- All Purpose Flour (whole wheat too)
- Vanilla Extract
- Granulated Sugar
- Brown Sugar
- Cocoa
- Baking Powder & Baking Soda
- Cream of Tar Tar
- Honey

Essentials List of Refrigerated or Freezer Items to Have On Hand:

These items round out what I recommend to have on hand before you do your fresh vegetable and fresh meat shopping. The point is that if you have these items stocked up, you have much more variety in your food preparation. And more variety means more flexibility, which is the de-stress way of operation in your home kitchen.

Dairy Essentials:

- **Unsalted Butter** - I keep a couple of pounds in the freezer and one stick in the refrigerator.
- **Eggs or Egg Substitute** - Nothing can quite take the place of eggs for food and baking preparations. So keep it stocked.
- **Parmesan Cheese** - It keeps very well ungrated, in a chunk. Grate as you need it and it will stay available for quite awhile.
- **Cream or sour cream** - Depending on your diet, a small container of cream is great to have on hand for a quick dessert. And sour cream lasts long enough and has enough uses that it's always good to have on hand.
- **Low Fat Yogurt** - Especially good if you want the lusciousness of cream or sour cream without the added saturated fat. It's great as it is, with berries, in health shakes, in baking or mashed potatoes.
- **Various Cheeses** - A semi-firm cheese like Gruyere Cheese or Havarti Cheese is good to have on hand for a quick cheese & fruit plate or a dynamite toasted cheese sandwich. And it'll last much longer than other types of soft cheeses.
- **Milk or Nut Milk**

Miscellaneous Fresh Essentials:

- **Lemon and/or Limes** - Fresh lemons especially, perk up any dish and add a nice fresh flavor to all of your preparations.
- **Garlic bulbs** - Yes, I'll buy the pre-peeled garlic in the jar to save time. But I especially like the flavor of garlic in the bulb and it lasts a while in a mesh fabric hanging in air.
- **Yellow and Red Onions** - I store them in an open air wire container so they stay fresh longer.
- **Sweet or Russet Potatoes** - Store in a cool, dark place and they will last a while. They last longer than the thin skinned potato varieties, so for having on hand, they are an essential.
- **Various Fresh Nuts** - Almonds, walnuts, etc... and they store well in the freezer too.
- **Puff Pastry Sheets** - Makes anything more elegant with a puff pastry crust.
- **Pre-Cut Puff Pastry Squares** - Some ethnic stores carry the 5"X5" squares. These are great because they are quick to defrost, make great individual free style fruit tarts or add elegance to pastry crowned soups!
- **Filo Dough** - Stays very well frozen and defrosts fairly quickly. Adds a nice touch of elegance to any food preparation.
- **Bacon, Smoked Turkey, Smoked Firm Tofu** - I keep this in the freezer, ready to use. I divide the bacon into four parts, cut in half down the middle and then separate the slices. Then store in ziplock bags in the freezer. Great as that added flavor enhancer.
- **Variety of Frozen Vegetable** - I especially like fresh vegetables, but let's be realistic, you need to have emergency vegetables ready incase. So here are my favorites when used right, peas, spinach, broccoli, lima beans and green beans. The secret is to defrost them in cold water first. Drain them, then treat them like freshly blanched vegetables.