

+KITCHEN TOOLS AND COOKING TIPS

By Dr. Mark Hyman

Getting the basic equipment makes food preparation easier, faster and more fun, so arm yourself with the proper tools. If you don't have good boots you can't climb a mountain. If you don't have knives, pots and pans and basics for making our own food, you can't feed yourself right. Find all the kitchen essentials at Wal-Mart, Target or a kitchen store.

Consider this equipment a toolkit for taking care of your body. You can substitute or make do with other tools if need be, but I would strongly recommend that you consider purchasing the following items if you don't already have them.

I would also recommend that you buy the best-quality tools possible as you build your kitchen. These tools can last you a lifetime if you start with quality items and take proper care of them.

ESSENTIAL KITCHEN TOOLS & HARDWARE

- ☐ A set of good-quality knives
- ☐ Wooden cutting boards—one for animal products, another for fruits and vegetables
- ☐ An 8-inch nonstick sauté pan
- ☐ A 12-inch nonstick sauté pan (Nonstick pans can vary in quality. Buy the highest quality, such as Calphalon or All-Clad, because of the health risks of poorer-quality nonstick pans using Teflon.)
- ☐ An 8-quart stockpot
- ☐ A 2-quart saucepan with lid
- ☐ A 4-quart saucepan with lid
- ☐ An 11-inch-square nonstick (non-Teflon) stovetop griddle
- ☐ Dutch oven
- ☐ Grill pan
- ☐ 3 or 4 cookie or baking sheets
- ☐ A food processor
- ☐ A blender
- ☐ An immersion blender
- ☐ An instant-read chef's thermometer
- ☐ A can opener
- ☐ A coffee grinder for flaxseed or spices
- ☐ Wire whisks
- ☐ Spring tongs
- ☐ A fish spatula
- ☐ Rubber spatulas
- ☐ Assorted measuring cups (1 quart, 1 pint, and 1 cup), dry and liquid style
- ☐ A lemon/citrus reamer
- ☐ Microplanes in assorted sizes

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PREPARE YOUR INNER CHEF

Americans spend more time, as I have said, watching cooking on television, than cooking. Most of our parents didn't teach us how to cook nourishing, satisfying meals. Modern kitchens are often nothing more than fancy vending machines that don't require coins.

Not everyone likes cooking. That's ok. Not everyone likes school, or exercise. But is an important life skill unless you have a personal chef or your spouse or partner is happy to be your personal chef. I know this may seem like a lot to do when you already have a busy schedule. But it's worth it. The difference you will see and feel is well worth the time investment you make in the program.

The biggest reason people say they don't cook is lack of time, or lack of energy. I come home too late or am just too tired to cook. I get it. I am very driven, have many "careers" – doctor, author, educator along with being a father, husband, son, brother, uncle, and friend. I have the energy to do all these things because I take care of my body and mind. I sleep 8 hours, exercise 4-6 times a week. And I cook and eat good food. And I have become an expert in instant food. I can go into a fridge and pantry and prepare a delicious hot fresh, whole food meal in less time than it would take to bake a frozen pizza or order take out and go pick it up.

Give me 15 minutes and I can feed my family and myself. You can do it too. You don't have to become gourmet chef. You can make simple foods if you plan ahead a bit and get your kitchen ready for the week. But you do have to learn certain cooking basics. And get your family involved in cutting, chopping, peeling and cleaning -- it is a wonderful family habit and time together without distraction, a chance to a catch up and nourish each other.

LEARN BASIC COOKING SKILLS

Here are my simple cooking basic instructions.

Cooking Vegetables

Steam or sauté your vegetables with some fresh spices.

To steam simply:

- Put 1 cup of water in the bottom of a saucepan.
- Purchase a steaming rack, (You can get then at any grocery store for about \$2) and place it over the water.
- Chop your veggies, place them in the steaming rack, cover and steam them for 4-8 minutes depending on the vegetable and your desired level of tenderness.
- Add your favorite seasonings, drizzle with extra-virgin olive oil and a little sea salt to taste.

You can cook almost any vegetable this way. It's easy. It's delicious. And it takes almost no time at all.

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To sauté:

- Put 1 tbsp. of olive oil in the bottom of a frying pan. Turn the heat on medium high.
- Chop your veggies and drop them in.
- Sauté for 5-7 minutes for desired flavor and tenderness.
- You can also add onions, garlic, and / or mushrooms (shitake are particularly tasty) to sautéed veggies to make them more flavorful. To do this you might want to add your onions, garlic, and mushrooms first with a little salt, sauté them, and then drop in your chopped veggies.
- Add your favorite fresh herbs or ground spices

Chicken and Fish

Fish and chicken are dead simple. Just grill, broil, or sauté your fish or chicken; season with olive oil, lemon juice, rosemary, garlic, ginger, or cilantro. Here's how.

To broil:

- Sprinkle some sea salt and whatever other seasoning you choose on your fish or chicken. And place them under the broiler.
- Fish will probably take around 7-10 minutes. Just watch it until the fish or chicken is tender and white throughout. Chicken will take longer. Perhaps up to 15 minutes. You will know it's done when you press the chicken with your finger and it's relatively firm.

To grill:

- Simply season your fish or chicken and put it down on the grill. That's it. The same cooking times above apply. Turn once half way through cooking.

To sauté:

- Place 1 tbsp. of olive oil in the bottom of a frying pan. Turn the heat on medium high.
- Heat up your oil first. Then place your seasoned fish or chicken in the pan.
- Turn regularly to avoid browning the fish or chicken too much on one side. This will be particularly important for chicken. Fish should be turned only once.
- Follow the instructions for time above.
- As with the instructions for sautéing vegetables, you could add onions, garlic, mushrooms, or even vegetables to this dish to change it up and make it interesting.

You can season your meat once they are done cooking with sea salt and 1 tsp. to 1 tbsp. of extra virgin olive oil, and lemon juice if you choose. (Note you probably won't add more extra virgin olive oil if you sauté.)

Legumes

Heat up canned beans (I prefer the small white canelli or navy beans) with 1–2 tbsp. of extra virgin olive oil, some rosemary, and sea salt. Add sautéed, chopped vegetables to the beans. Be creative.

Tofu

Follow the same guidelines for chicken or fish or simply add tofu to your steamed or sautéed vegetables.

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Cooking Brown Rice

To cook brown rice boil 4 cups of filtered water, rinse 2 cups of dried brown rice, put it in the water with 1 tbsp. of olive oil and ½ tsp. of sea salt, cover and leave covered, bring to boil, and simmer on lowest heat for 45 minutes. Do not stir. Optional: add 1 tsp. of turmeric or 2 round ¼-inch slices of ginger to the water when cooking. These are powerful anti-inflammatories. I always cook this in advance and leave it in the fridge and quickly warm it up in a pan with a little olive oil or if you have to you can microwave it.

Spice Up Your Food

Remember to add spices to your cooking. Place some slices of ginger in the cooked brown rice or add 1–2 tsp. of turmeric for delicious yellow, Indian-style rice. Add fresh rosemary, chopped fresh cilantro, or fresh crushed garlic to your vegetables.

Then serve. That's all there is to it.

That's it. No fancy recipes, no long preparation times. Just simple, real, whole, allergen-free foods.

Getting everything ready each week will make your life go smoothly and help you achieve maximum results. I can't emphasize enough the benefits of being prepared, having all your ingredients ready, and spending a little time up front preparing and cooking what you need for the week.

Let's review these simple cooking and preparation suggestions:

- Pick simple preparation methods such as sautéing, grilling, or broiling for fish and chicken.
- Mix up the flavors of your chicken and fish by changing your cooking methods and adding in various spices from the list I gave you above. This will help you keep from getting tired of eating the same thing every day.
- Steam the vegetables, or lightly sauté in olive oil with garlic and ginger and a little bit of salt.
- Cook 2 cups of brown rice at once and keep it in a tightly-sealed container in the fridge. Heat it up just before eating.
- Pre-cut or chop a few days worth of vegetables and keep them in sealed glass containers or ziplock baggies so you can steam or sauté them when you're ready.