Tools for Food Preparation and Dishwashing 1951
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TOOLS

for food preparation and dishwashing

Home and Garden Bulletin No. 3
U. S. Department of Agriculture

Tools

for food preparation and dishwashing

Any kitchen needs dozens of tools and utensils to serve a variety of purposes from paring vegetables to dishwashing. Though the work that any one of these tools does may be small, the sum total of all the jobs is a large share of the kitchen work. A homemaker will find it well worth her while to consider carefully what tools she needs and to buy the ones that will serve her best.

In the following pages various kinds of tools and small utensils on the market are discussed and, wherever possible, guides to judging quality are also given.

Some general pointers

In general, double-use tools are the best investment. Special-purpose gadgets, unless frequently used, can clutter up the kitchen unnecessarily. There are a few items in such constant use that it saves both time and steps to have duplicates in different parts of the kitchen. This is especially true of paring knives and spoons used for stirring and tasting.

When choosing tools and utensils of metal, think of the amount of use they will get. For those that will be used hard, choose durable metals—stainless steel, heavily tinned steel, or aluminum that is fairly thick or reinforced to resist bending. For tools you use only occasionally, light tin plate or lightweight aluminum may be perfectly satisfactory. Aluminum, unless it has a special stain-resisting finish, tends to leave marks on some other materials. Look for this finish when buying aluminum mixing bowls, stirring tools, colanders, dishpans, or sink strainers.

Enameledware, because of its smooth, hard surface, is good for some food preparation and dishwashing utensils. An acid-resisting enamel is best.

Glass used in measures and mixing bowls should be of the heat-resisting type. For refrigerator dishes (at least for their covers) and for measures, transparent glass is a good choice—it lets you see the contents. Mixing bowls may be as colorful as you like.

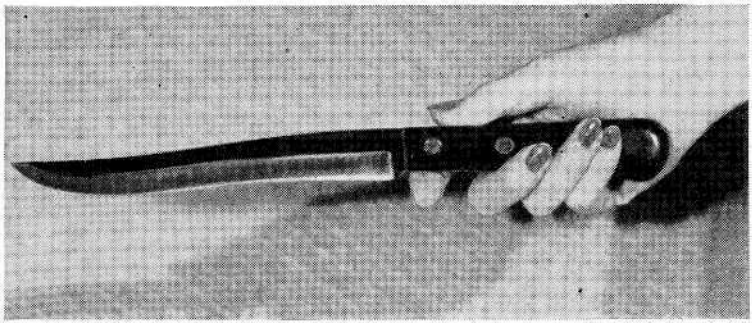
To give good service, rubber or synthetic rubber in kitchen tools should be resistant to grease and not easily damaged by heat. That used in sink mats and scrapers should be rather flexible. Hard rubber, which is rigid, is used for cutlery handles.

Plastics are coming into wider use in small utensils and handles. Their clear, bright colors are very attractive. Plastics are usually smoothly molded and so are easy to keep clean. Watch out for any design that does have dirt-catching crevices or creases, or sharp edges that cut into the hand. Transparent plastics are good for food storage containers because you can see what is in them. When buying plastic pieces, read the label to find out what temperature the material will stand. Some plastics can take boiling or near boiling temperatures; some can't.

Painted or varnished finishes on handles of tools often do not wear well. Frequent washing will cause a poor finish to peel off and when it is gone the wood roughens. Some finishes soften in water and stain everything they touch. A very durable material for handles is the new resin-bonded or plastic-treated wood. However, it is a good precaution to avoid soaking any wooden handle.

The handle design of kitchen tools is important, especially in a tool that has to be held with a firm grasp. When selecting a tool, hold it as you would when using it and, without gripping it too tightly, notice whether it feels secure. Be sure the handle is comfortable to grasp and won't slip or turn too easily. For tools to be used at the range, handles of material that will stay cool—wood or plastic rather than metal—are a convenience. However, such handles will scorch or burn, so you must be careful to keep them away from the flame or heating unit.

Some kitchen tools, especially the more expensive ones, have labels with information about materials and workmanship that will help you in making your selection. Be sure to look for such labels and to read all the information they contain.



When you select a kitchen tool, try holding it as you would when using it to be sure the handle is comfortable to grasp.

Tools for food preparation

Most tools for handling and preparing food are used and washed repeatedly. So look for features that contribute to ease of handling and cleaning and resistance to damage from water. Look, too, for sturdy construction—parts well joined and finished, moving parts that operate smoothly.

Cutlery

There is no kitchen tool that will give its user greater satisfaction than a good knife—and nothing more exasperating than a poor one. A few well-chosen, good-quality, and well-cared for knives will do far more for you than a large set of poor ones.

To do all the many cutting jobs in a kitchen, you will need a number of different knives and other sharp-edged tools. There is a wide variety to choose from, each type designed for special kinds of work.

● **Paring knives.** Blades of paring knives are shaped in different ways. Some are straight along the cutting edge, some curved. They differ in length, shape of curve, and angle of point. Women have very decided preferences as to blade shapes. Since paring knives are in such constant use in a kitchen, it is worth your while to try to find the ones you can use most easily. You may prefer different types for different purposes.

Be particular about the handle of a paring knife. One that you have to grip tightly can be very tiring when you use the knife for a long job.

● **Peelers and fruit knives.** The swivel-blade peeler has become very popular for fruit and vegetable paring because of the thinness of the paring removed and the speed with which it works. It comes in different styles—all inexpensive.

The grapefruit knife is another special that is indispensable to some women. Its blade is curved to cut close to the skin of a grapefruit or orange half, and double-edged so that either side may be used for cutting. The blade may be saw-toothed or plain.

● **Utility knife.** The utility knife is especially good for such jobs as slicing tomatoes and fruit and for boning chicken. It has a slender blade about 5 inches long and is between a paring knife and a slicer in size. Knives of this type are sold also in sets as steak knives for table use.

• **Slicers and carvers.** There are several kinds of slicing knives; all have rather slender blades that are often somewhat flexible. For general purposes, a blade 7 to 8 inches long is a good choice. It will slice most kinds of meat, carve chicken, cut sandwiches, slice bread. Its pointed tip is good for cutting around bones. A trimmer has a narrower blade—especially good for removing meat from bones.

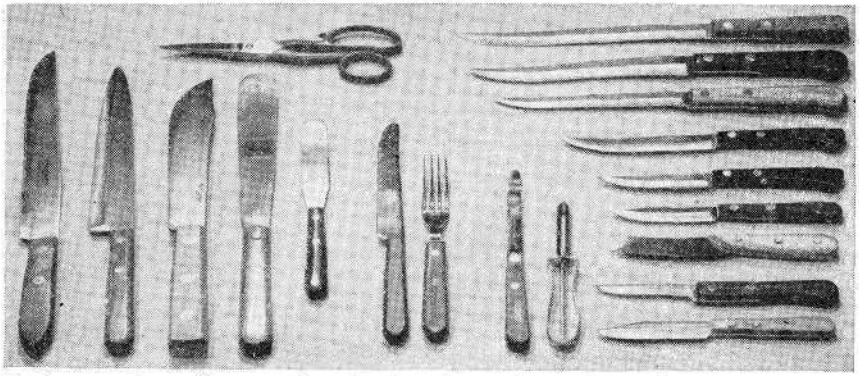
The carver is similar to the all-purpose slicer in shape and size, but it has a somewhat broader, heavier blade. It can be used for the same purposes as the slicer—some women prefer one, some the other.

For large hams and beef roasts there are slicers with blades 10 to 12 inches long, rounded or squared at the end rather than pointed. These are designed for the long strokes needed to cut large, thin slices of meat.

• **Butcher knives and cleavers.** Butcher knives and cleavers are sturdy heavy-duty tools. Butcher knives have broad, rigid blades from 6 to 8 inches long, with strong, blunt tips. They are needed for cutting up large pieces of meat at butchering time and are useful, too, for cutting large heads of cabbage, melons, and squashes.

Cleavers are still heavier tools, used for hacking bones. The blade of a cleaver is thick and heavy.

• **French cook knife.** The blade of a cook knife is almost straight along its cutting edge, slanting evenly from handle to point. In household-size cook knives, blades are from 6 to 9 inches in length and vary in width. This type of knife is designed especially for use on a cutting board—for mincing vegetables, cutting through bundles of vegetables, cutting sandwiches. It can be used for carving, too.



Kitchen cutlery: Shears; bread, french cook, and butcher knives. Two spatulas; case knife and fork; grapefruit knife; swivel peeler. From top down: Two slicers, trimmer, utility knife; five paring knives.

• **Bread knife.** If bread is baked at home or purchased unsliced, a bread knife is a good investment. A slicing knife will be dulled if used often for cutting bread. A bread knife with saw-toothed or scalloped edge slices fresh bread without crumbling it.

• **Case knife.** A case knife is a dull-edged knife, more for spreading than for cutting. Use it for any purpose where a sharp cutting edge is not needed and so save your better knives.

• **Spatulas.** Spatulas are limber-bladed, dull-edged tools. Their flexibility makes them very useful for spreading sandwiches, icing cakes, and loosening baked or molded foods from pans.

A general-purpose spatula may have a blade 6 to 8 inches long and 1 to 1¼ inches wide. A small spatula with a blade about 4 inches long and three-fourths inch wide is handy for loosening muffins from their pans, for reaching into narrow-mouthed jars, and for putting the finishing touches on cake frostings. Broad spatulas with blades 2½ to 3 inches wide and about 6 inches long are sometimes used as pancake turners, but they are less generally useful than those with narrower blades.

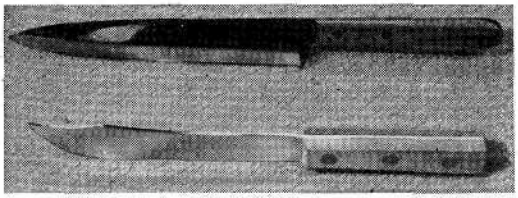
• **Kitchen shears.** A pair of shears in the kitchen will come into frequent use for snipping dried fruits, a bit of parsley, or the core of grapefruit, or for cutting paper to line a cake pan. Shears designed for the kitchen usually have an opening between the handles that is wide enough to grip bottle caps, and so can double as a bottle opener.

• **Materials and construction.** The materials in a knife and the way it is made determine the kind of service it will give.

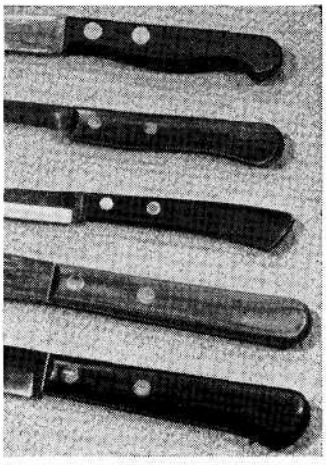
Blades.—The first requirement of a good blade is that it will take and hold a sharp edge. Steel with a high carbon content (hard steel) is excellent for this purpose. Another desirable characteristic is freedom from staining and rusting. Stainless steel always meets this requirement, but a stainless-steel blade will not necessarily have a sharp edge. In fact, some blades of stainless steel are very poor in holding an edge. Chromium plating is another method that manufacturers use to prevent staining of blades. High-carbon steel plated with chromium makes a good blade.

Because you can't tell from the appearance of the metal whether it will be a good cutting blade, you should look carefully at the construction of the knife. If the knife is well constructed, the quality of the steel is likely to be good, but if it is cheaply made you can't expect much of the blade.

Some knives, usually the more expensive ones, have forged blades made by heating and hammering the steel until it is fine grain and the blade is the desired shape. Hammer marks are often visible. A forged blade



Above—The upper knife has a hollow-ground blade with a half tang. The blade of the lower knife is plain ground and has a tang that extends the full length of the handle.



Right—Knife handles of several different shapes. Handles may be made of hard rubber, wood, plastic, or plastic-treated wood.

tapers in thickness from handle to point and from back to a thin cutting edge. As a final step the blade is sharpened evenly along its entire length. Often the metal is shaped into a shoulder between the blade and the tang—the part that extends into the handle.

Beveled blades are cut from a piece of steel that is thicker on one side than the other, tapering from the back to the cutting edge, which is ground. A good beveled blade can be very satisfactory for general use.

Although the cheapest and poorest knives are made with stamped blades, a stamped blade is not always a poor one. The blades are stamped from metal of uniform thickness and the cutting edge is ground. If the grinding is very much tapered, a good cutting edge is obtained, but if the grinding is done only at the very edge, it tapers too abruptly and it is impossible to get or keep a sharp edge on the knife.

Hollow grinding is a means of obtaining a blade that is very thin and sharp at its cutting edge. A hollow-ground knife is easily recognized by the wide slightly concave ground surface that extends the full length of the blade. With care, hollow-ground knives stay sharp, but the thin edge is readily nicked and damaged by careless handling.

For some knives—slicers, for instance—blades that have a certain amount of flexibility are desirable. Other knives, such as butcher and bread knives, may work better if blades are rigid.

Handles.—The way the handle of a knife is attached to the blade is an indication of quality. The metal of the blade should extend far enough into the handle so that this part (called the tang) can be secured with two or three good-sized rivets. Beware of a knife that has a flimsy metal collar with perhaps a single small nail through the handle.

Kitchen knife handles are often of wood. Hard woods sanded smooth, especially if treated to make them moisture resistant, are very durable.

Rosewood is most commonly used. Cheaper woods finished with paint, stain, or varnish can be an annoyance—the finish may peel or soften and rub off on hands and dish towels. Hard rubber and special types of plastics make good handles.

When you choose a knife, try the handle to be sure it is comfortable to grasp—neither too large nor too small.

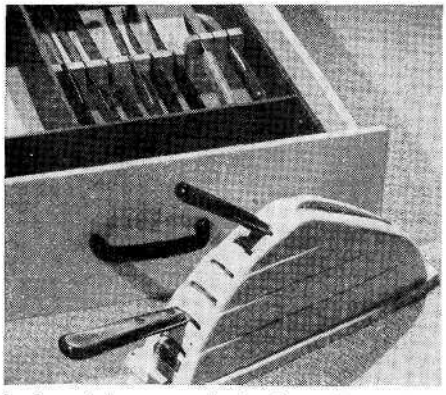
• Care of cutlery. It's much easier to keep knives sharp than to recondition them if they become badly dulled or blunted. Hollow-ground blades especially are subject to damage from careless handling. Be careful that blades do not strike against each other or against other tools lest they be nicked or dulled or the chrome plating scratched. If plating is scratched, the exposed metal may rust or stain.

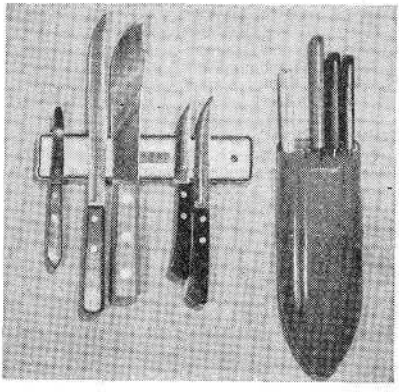
Don't use a good knife as a pancake turner; the heat can damage the blade.

Never let your good knives be used for cutting paper and string or for sharpening pencils. A cheap knife just for such purposes will save your good ones.

Protect knife blades during storage. There are many ways to do this. The cardboard sheath that comes with knives is good but it will not last long. Racks with slots for individual knives are more durable and more convenient.

There are racks of plastic or wood that can be fastened to the wall; some are heavy enough to stand on a table. Some sets of cutlery come in specially designed wooden blocks with a slot for each knife; the block may be attached to the wall or laid in a drawer. The home carpenter can easily make a holder by sawing slots in a block of wood that can be fitted into a kitchen drawer.

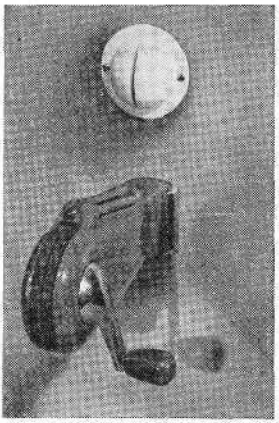




Left—A homemade knife rack, and one of plastic with sharpening stones in the slots. Right—Holders for wall use—magnet type and plastic type.

Left—Three sharpeners of the hand type: A steel with guard at its base, a flat stone, and a rotary stone that is rolled on the table.

Right—These sharpeners are fastened to a wall. One is rotary; the other has a slot through which the knife is drawn.



Another satisfactory kind of knife holder is the magnetic type. It is fastened to the wall and the knives are simply laid against its magnetized surface where they are held securely. A few knife holders have sharpening stones in the slots so that each time a knife is drawn out it is honed. This helps keep the knife sharp.

• **Knife sharpening and sharpeners.** Any good new knife has a thin cutting edge. With use, this thin edge becomes bent over so that the blade is dulled. Sharpening such an edge is easily done by honing—stroking on a fine steel or fine stone. Hard steel blades can be kept sharp for a long time just by honing. Softer steel wears down more rapidly.

When the edge of a blade is worn back to the thicker part of the metal or when it is nicked, grinding is needed to produce a new thin cutting edge. Grinding wears the blade back farther and farther, making it more and more difficult to secure a good edge. Therefore, honing should be used as long as possible.

For sharpening knives, makers of fine cutlery often recommend using a steel such as butchers use. The heel of the blade is placed against the tip of the steel and held at an angle so that only the blade edge touches the steel. The knife is drawn lightly down the steel; the stroke ends with the tip of the blade at the base of the steel. A few strokes on either side of the blade sharpen the knife. The steel should have a guard at its base to protect the hands of the user, should the knife slip.

A fine, flat sharpening stone is also recommended for sharpening good knives. The knife is drawn across the stone so that the full length of the blade is covered with each stroke.

Another type of sharpener is the rotary sharpener with a stone wheel. If the stone is fine and the knife held lightly against it, it too has a honing action. Coarser stones have more of a grinding action. This type of sharpening may be needed for knives that have lost their original sharp

edge, especially for knives of medium or poor quality. A good rotary sharpener is designed to hold the blade at the correct angle to the stone. Some sharpen both sides of the blade at once, some one side at a time.

Still another type of sharpener has a pair of stones set in a V shape. The blade of the knife is drawn through the V to straighten the edge and sharpen it.

There are also sharpeners made of steel discs between which knife blades are drawn. These will sharpen knives of soft steel but usually leave a ragged edge and are damaging to good blades.

Tools for stirring, lifting, dipping, turning

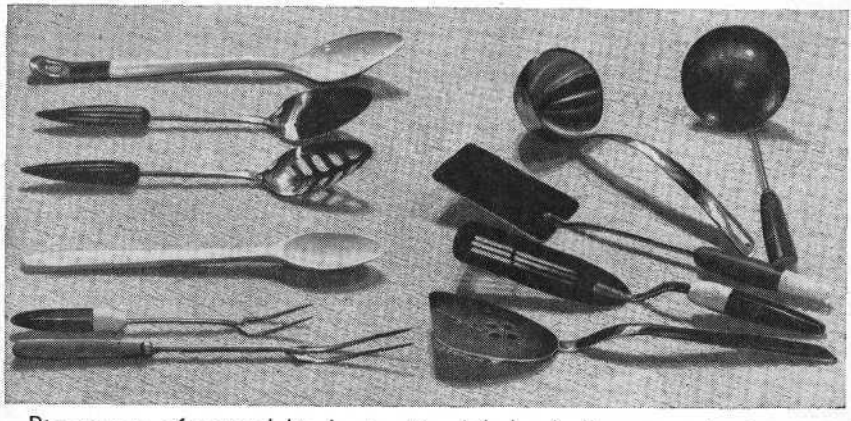
Spoons, forks, ladles, and turners are food-handling tools, important because of their frequent use.

• **Spoons.** Every kitchen needs teaspoons and tablespoons to be used for tasting and light stirring. Some women use tablespoons for all kinds of mixing and for beating, but spoons with larger bowls and longer handles are generally better for such purposes.

A large spoon with a solid bowl and one with a pierced or slotted bowl will take care of many of the mixing and beating jobs. The slotted or perforated spoon is useful, too, for dipping food out of liquid, and the solid one for serving nonliquid food. Handles are fairly long to permit stirring and mixing in deep utensils. Hand grips are large enough to be held easily.

Many of the better spoons are of stainless steel. Less expensive ones of chrome-plated metal or enameledware may give reasonably good service but cannot be expected to last as long as steel.

For some uses, a wooden spoon may be preferred to one of metal.



Big spoons of several kinds, two-tined forks, ladles, pancake turners.

The handle never gets hot and it never leaves a mark on a bowl or pan. However, it is easily stained and may absorb flavors. A shallow-bowled wooden spoon, shaped somewhat like a paddle, mixes and stirs without accumulating any of the food—when used for mixing cake, for instance, it does not have to be scraped out often during the process. There are wooden spoons with deeper bowls for those who prefer them.

For mixing and beating, choose spoons of the length that suits you best and that fits the utensils in which they will be used.

● **Forks.** Every kitchen needs a fork for lifting meat and other solid foods and for testing for doneness. For use at the range a two-tined fork with a long handle is best. Its tines should be sharp enough to pierce food easily and the handle long enough to keep your hand away from heat and spattering grease. For general use you may also want a common four-tined fork.

● **Ladles.** Ladles are needed for serving liquids such as soups and chowders, for filling jars or cartons when preparing food for canning or freezing. A ladle with bowl of one-half to three-fourths cup capacity is a generally useful size. If the ladle is used for skimming milk, a rather shallow bowl is good. A lip for pouring is a desirable feature.

● **Pancake turners.** Lifting and turning of tender foods is best done with a pancake turner. For food that needs to be drained as well as lifted, a perforated blade is helpful.

Choose a turner with a blade broad enough to support average-sized pancakes and servings of food, and somewhat flexible so that it can be slipped under food easily. Be sure the blade is not so limber that it will bend and let the food slip off.

Handles of pancake turners are usually fairly long. If you like a short handle better, you can find it on a broad turner with offset handle like that of a trowel.

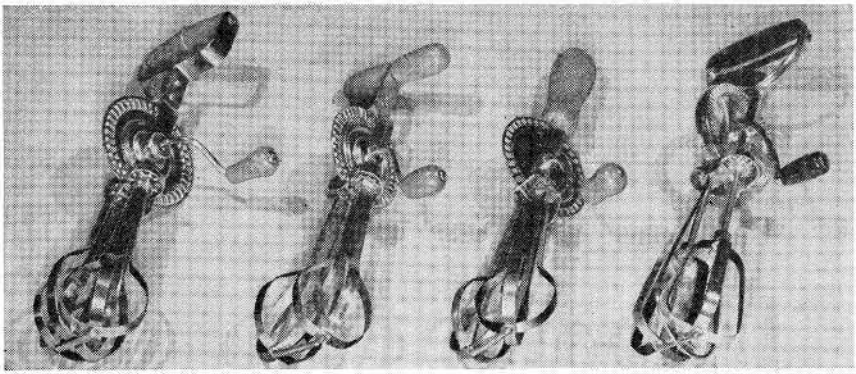
Tools for beating and whipping

The job of a beater or whip is either to make food smooth or to mix air into it so it will be light.

● **Rotary beaters.** It is an economy to buy a rotary beater of good quality. Besides being less durable, a cheaper beater takes much more time and energy whenever you use it.

Look for a beater with a main handle that you can hold firmly without an uncomfortably tight grip, and a handle on the wheel that can be grasped easily.

Notice the wheels of the beater. The larger wheel has several times



Beaters have different kinds of handles. There are differences too in the number and shape of the blades and the way they are put together.

as many cogs as each of the two smaller ones, and the greater the difference in size between the two the easier it is to operate. A ball-bearing drive also helps to make the beater operate easily. See that the cogs are well shielded at the point where they mesh so nothing can get caught in them.

Better beaters have four rotating loops (eight blades) in addition to the supporting wires; cheap ones have only two (four blades). The eight-bladed beater whips food faster than one with four blades. Oval blades attached to the shank well below the gears are easier to clean than pear-shaped ones that come close together at the gears, making a long slender enclosure between blades.

Stainless steel blades are durable and resistant to bending—an important point because a bent blade can quickly jam the whole beater. Less expensive beaters may have tinned blades. If sturdy and rigid, these will give reasonably good service.

The wire that supports the beater should be attached or flattened in such a way that the blades will operate close to the bottom of the bowl and pick up all parts of the food.

To keep a beater in good condition, wash or rinse it as soon as you have finished using it. Don't immerse the cogs in water.

• **Whips or whisks.** For beating egg whites, whips or whisks are especially good because they blend in more air than does a rotary beater. Some expert bakers of angel cakes always use a whip for the egg whites. Whips of fine wire are best for this purpose.

Whips or whisks are usually rather flat in shape and made of meshed wires or slotted metals. A less common type consists of a bundle of wire loops with the ends firmly held together at the handle. The wires or metal of a whip should be rustless and all wire ends should be fastened smoothly and securely.

Tools for chopping and mashing

For reducing food to small bits or changing its form, choppers, mashers, presses, shredders, graters, and juicers are needed.

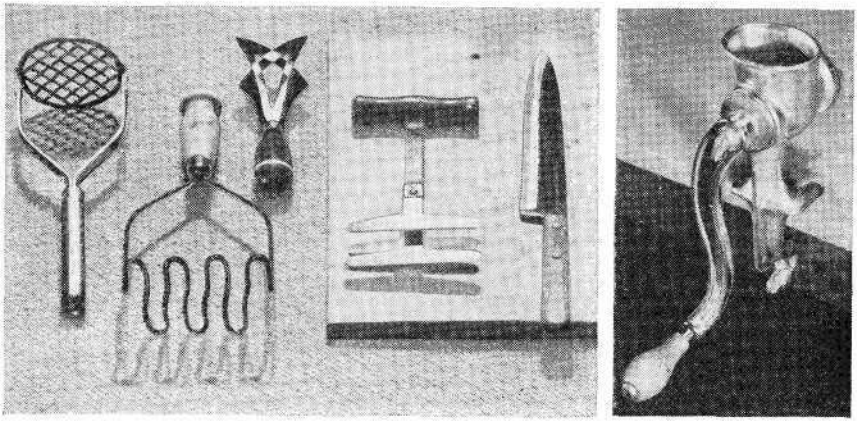
• **Choppers, mincers, cutting boards.** The chopper that screws to a table and is operated by a crank-type handle is a piece of equipment needed in most kitchens. It has many uses.

With this kind of chopper, several knives or plates are needed to control the fineness of the chopping. There should be room between chopping cylinder and table for a pan or bowl large enough to catch the food. Look for a chopper that will be simple to take apart, wash, and put back together. For chopping juicy foods, a chopper designed so that it will not leak is a convenience.

For small chopping jobs a handy tool is a chopping knife with curved blades—often known as a mincer. It is used with a shallow wooden bowl.

A cutting board is an essential for any kitchen. It need not be an expensive one—any smoothly finished board will do. On it you will cut vegetables, fruits, and meats, thus saving your knives, your table tops, and often your hands. It's faster and safer to cut on a board than against your thumb.

For mincing small amounts of parsley or onion, a straight-bladed sharp knife, such as a cook knife, used on the cutting board is good. For fine chopping, hold the tip of the knife firmly on the board with one hand and raise and lower the handle in a quick chopping motion. Or instead of a knife you may use a chopper made with two or three straight blades.



Two mashers, a small mincer to be used in a bowl, and a chopper and cook's knife for cutting on a board. At right, a crank-type chopper.

• **Mashers.** The most frequent use of a masher is for potatoes, but it is useful also for other vegetables and fruits. The most common type is made of heavy rigid wire looped back and forth and attached to a handle. Another type is made with a round, perforated metal disk attached to a handle. The openings are usually smaller than the spaces between wires so food is mashed finer, but it is more likely to be packed down.

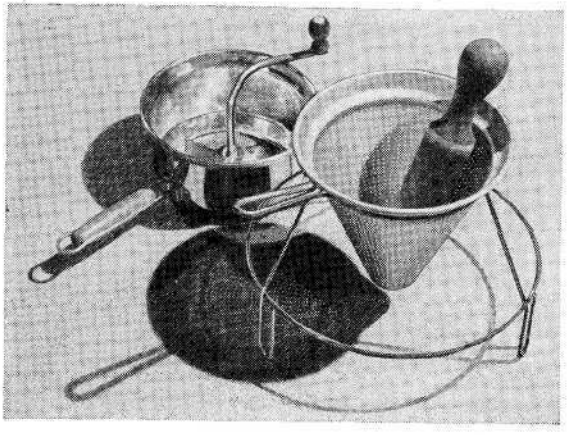
The mashing surface should be flat and rounded at the edges so that it will work close to the side of the pan. See that the handle of the masher you choose will be comfortable in your hand as you exert pressure on it.

• **Food presses.** Food presses are for making purees, separating pulp of fruits and vegetables from skin and seeds, or for ricing vegetables.

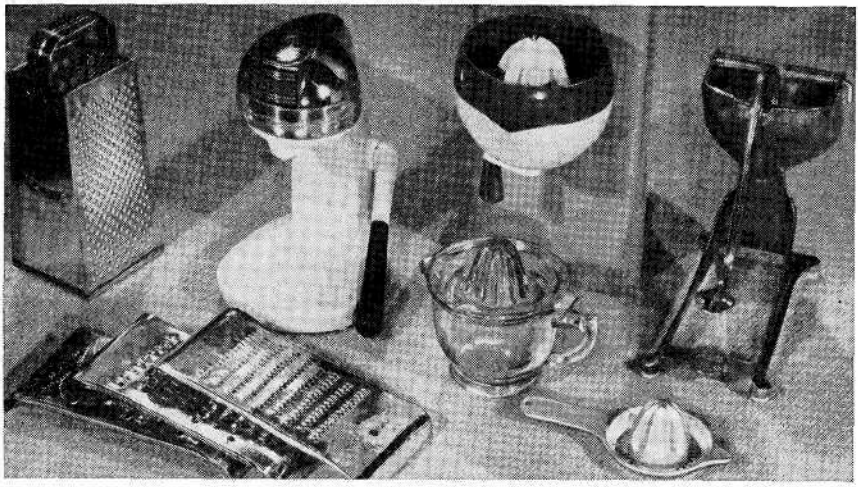
One type of food press is a tall perforated metal cone supported in a broad-based wire frame. A slender cone or cylinder of wood is rotated within the metal cone to push food against the sides and force it through the holes.

Another type is shaped more like a saucepan. It has a handle on one side near the bottom and hooklike supports at the same level to hold it over a bowl or pan. A shaped blade, operated by a crank handle, draws food down and pushes it through the perforated bottom of the press. This type comes in different sizes. There is a small one suitable for preparing baby food, a medium-sized one for general use, and a large one that is especially useful at canning and preserving time.

Still another kind of food press, not often found now, is the ricer with a perforated cup and long-handled plunger that pushes down into the cup and forces food through the holes. It is good for ricing potatoes but is less generally useful than the other types of presses.



At the left is a press operated with a crank; blades at the bottom force the food through the perforations. In the cone-shaped press, food is pushed through the holes by rotation of the wooden cylinder against sides of cone.



Graters and shredders with different cutting surfaces—a four-sided combination and a nesting set of three. Juicers range from the little cup-size one at the lower right to the large lever-operated types.

• **Shredders and graters.** In selecting a shredder or grater, look for one that is sturdy and firm.

Usually shredders and graters are made of tinned steel. Cutting edges are formed by drilled or punched holes. The drilled holes are better for shredding because they have smooth edges that cut food into bits of definite and uniform shape. Punched holes are ragged to that they tear the food, an advantage only when you want to extract juice and flavor. Size of holes determines the fineness or coarseness of the shredding or grating.

For convenience, shredders and graters of different sizes are usually combined in a single piece or in a set. A hollow boxlike type may have a different sized cutter on each of its four sides. There are also sets of several flat shredders with curved ends to provide handholds. These fit together for space-saving storage.

After using a grater or shredder, wash it promptly and dry it thoroughly. A brush for washing saves fingers and dishcloths. Drying in a warm oven or over a heating unit that is still warm is more thorough than towel drying.

• **Juicers.** For small amounts of fresh orange or lemon juice a little reamer that fits over a cup is handy and takes up little space. You may find these in plastic, glass, or metal. Glass juicers with their own deep saucers to catch and hold juice do not need to be used with a cup.

If you prepare orange juice in large quantities for drinking, you will want a faster juicer. There are many types. In general, a reamer that is

turned by a crank with one hand while the other hand holds the orange half extracts less of the oil from the skin than does a juicer in which the orange half is squeezed between two cones or plates. If you have an electric mixer you will probably use a juicer attachment for it.

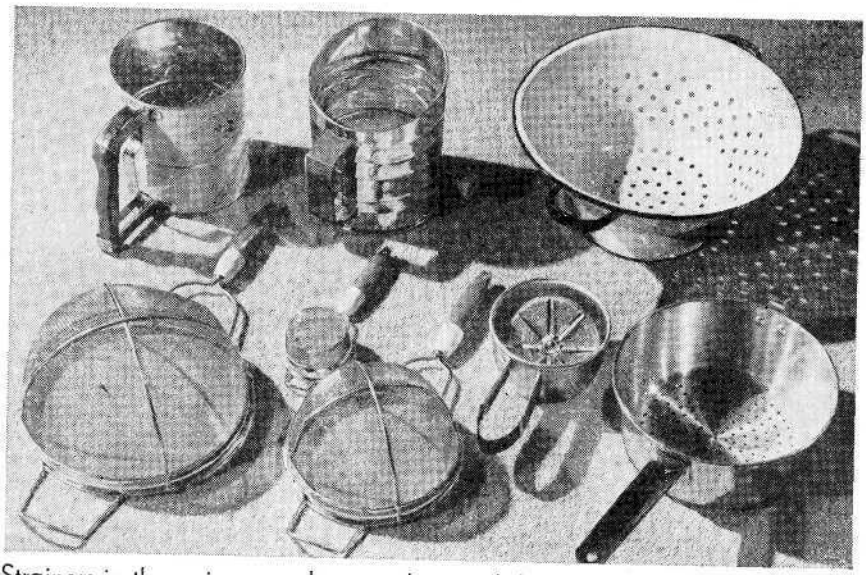
Tools for draining, straining, sifting

Both colanders and strainers are used mainly for washing or draining food. Sifters are used for dry foods—to remove lumps or to blend ingredients.

• **Colanders.**—Materials most used in colanders are aluminum and enameledware. A few colanders are of tin or stainless steel.

In an aluminum colander look for one that is heavy enough not to bend easily. An enameled one should be smoothly enameled, with the smallest possible amount of metal exposed at the holes. A tin colander should be well coated with tin so that it will not rust readily around the holes. The stainless steel colander is probably the most durable, but also the most expensive.

A colander may have legs or it may have a circular base; either will



Strainers in three sizes are shown at bottom left. At top left are two sifters, for one- and two-hand operation; small one in center has removable screen. Top colander has a base; the other is used over a bowl.

hold the perforated bowl high enough for good drainage. Some colanders have neither legs nor base and must be rested on the top of a bowl or pan.

Large holes provide rapid drainage but will let small bits of food like rice slip through. If holes are small, there should be enough of them to permit liquid to pass through readily.

• **Strainers.** You can find whatever size you are likely to need in a strainer—they come in sizes from 2 to 8 inches in diameter, with fine, medium, and coarse mesh. The smallest is the cup or tea strainer; it has a fine mesh. If you use a strainer instead of a colander for draining food you will want a large one with rather coarse mesh. A strainer to be used for flour sifting should have a medium or fine mesh.

Strainers reinforced with cross wires beneath the mesh are stronger than those without reinforcement, but they may be a little harder to clean.

The wire mesh of strainers should be rustless. Tinned wire, which is most often used, is satisfactory if of good quality. A thin tin coating may wear off and expose the base wire, which will rust. Stainless steel wire is sometimes used. A few tea strainers are made of a heat-resisting plastic.

A strainer should have some sort of loop or supporting device opposite the handle so the strainer can be suspended over a cup, bowl, or pan.

• **Flour sifters.** Anyone who does much baking will want a sifter, since a first rule is to sift flour before measuring it and the job can be done more quickly and easily with a tool especially designed for the purpose than with a strainer.

Sifters come in two general sizes. The smaller size holds about 2 cups of flour, enough for one pie, a dozen biscuits or muffins, or for some cakes. The larger size, which holds 4 cups or more, is better for yeast breads and larger quantity baking, and for cakes in which sugar and flour are sifted together.

Some sifters fit over measuring cups so that flour can be sifted directly into the cup. Many sifters are made for one-hand operation, an advantage when you want to sift flour into a batter while you stir it.

Large sifters sometimes have three screens, but this is not necessarily an advantage. The purpose of sifting flour several times is to incorporate air into it as well as to blend it thoroughly with other ingredients. A sifter with three screens set close together may not do as good a job as three separate siftings. Also, the triple sifter is harder to keep clean.

Sifters need not be washed frequently. Before they are put in water they should be shaken well to remove as much flour as possible. To prevent caking of flour in the mesh, keep a sifter away from moisture between washings.

Pastry tools

The tools needed for making pastry serve also for biscuits, cookies, and yeast rolls.

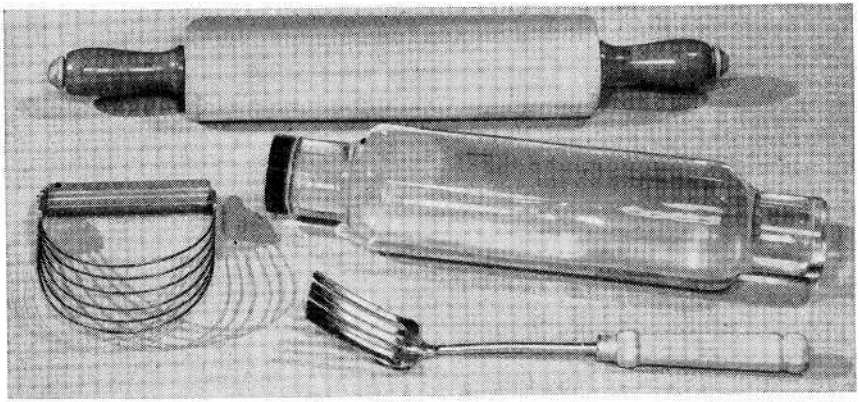
• **Rolling pin.** Of prime importance in pie making is a rolling pin. The most common type is of hardwood with free-turning handles. There are also glass or metal rolling pins, usually hollow so cold water or ice can be put in them to keep dough cold as it is rolled, which some cooks consider an advantage. Glass and metal pins are generally more expensive than wooden ones. A large or medium-sized rolling pin does its work more rapidly than a small one, but may be clumsier to handle, harder to store.

• **Pastry board.** Fine-grain hardwood that does not absorb fat readily is best for pastry boards. The surface should be smooth and free from cracks. Such a board is often part of a kitchen cabinet and is stored in its own slot. Be sure the board you select is large enough for rolling a pie crust with some room to spare so that flour will not be pushed overboard.

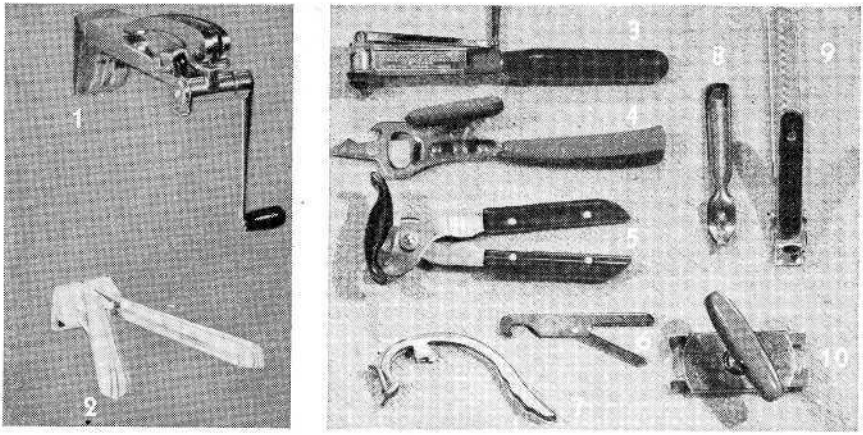
The side of the board that is used for rolling or kneading dough should not be used for cutting or any purpose that will damage its smooth surface. Do not leave the board soaking in water for moisture will raise the grain of the wood and so roughen the board.

Some women prefer a cloth to a board for rolling pastry, and like a knitted jacket for the rolling pin. The fabric holds flour and keeps the dough from sticking.

• **Pastry blender.** A blender for cutting shortening into flour is worth its keep if pastry or biscuits are made often. Two types of blenders are shown below.



For pastry making—a wooden rolling pin and a glass one to be filled with ice water; two types of tools for blending flour and shortening.



Wall-type openers: (1) for tin cans; (2) for screw and pry-off lids. Hand-type openers: (3, 4, 5) for tin cans; (6) for bottles—one end for pry-off, the other for screw caps; (7, 8) punches for juice cans; (9, 10) screw-cap openers, adjustable to containers of various sizes.

Tools for opening food containers

To save your patience, your fingers, and your good cutlery, have tools specially designed for opening cans, bottles, and jars. When possible select types that will open more than one kind of container so you won't need so many different ones.

• **Openers for tin cans.** For tin cans you need an opener that will pierce the tin easily and cut the lid away without leaving sharp edges to cut your hands and without whittling off bits of tin to fall into the food. An opener that lifts the lid instead of letting it drop back into the can is appreciated by most users. The wall-bracket type of opener is preferred by many women; however, there are also good hand models that cut smoothly and easily.

In buying an opener for tin cans, ask whether it will open rectangular cans as well as round ones.

For milk and fruit juice cans a punch-type opener is the most convenient. Choose one that turns the edges of the hole inside the can and makes a hole large enough for easy pouring.

• **Openers for screw tops.** Since screw-top jars come in a wide variety of sizes, select an opener that will take care of all kinds from extract bottles to wide-mouth fruit jars. One type of opener has V-shaped jaws with teeth on one or both sides; the spread of the jaws adjusts to different sized caps. Other types have one or two movable grips with some means of holding them firmly against the cap.

• **Openers for pry-off covers.** Pry-off lids are common on purchased jars and other containers. Though they can often be removed with a stiff-bladed case knife or a sturdy spoon handle, a special tool does the job more easily. Openers for pry-off covers come in several types. They may be in combination with other openers.

Caps on bottled beverages need a still different opener. Most can openers, both hand and wall types, have hooks to remove bottle caps, or a loop-shaped device can be bought for a few cents.

Utensils for measuring

Accuracy in measuring is an important factor in good cooking, and for accuracy you need the right kinds of measures. Standards for household measuring cups and spoons have been set up by the American Standards Association. Standard measures are used in most recipe development and for the same results you need them too. When you buy, look on labels for indication that the measures meet standards or ask the sales clerk whether they do.

• **Measuring spoons.** Measuring spoons usually come in sets of four: One-quarter teaspoon, one-half teaspoon, 1 teaspoon, and 1 tablespoon. Aluminum and plastic are the materials commonly used. Plastic spoons are likely to be damaged by boiling or near boiling temperatures, and may break if dropped on a hard surface.

Do not use measuring spoons for mixing and stirring or for prying lids from cans. Those of plastic may be broken; aluminum spoons may be bent so that they are no longer accurate.

Measuring cups and spoons. The cups are of aluminum, tin, glass, and plastic, in sizes from one-fourth cup to 1 quart. The set at right nests.

• **Measuring cups.** Glass and aluminum are the materials most often found in measuring cups. Tin is sometimes used and plastic cups are becoming more common. For measuring parts of a cup, glass or transparent plastic has an advantage in that the level of the contents can be seen through the side. Many plastics cannot be used for hot liquids because they discolor and warp if exposed to high temperatures. And a measure that has become warped is no longer accurate. A metal cup that can be set over heat for melting fat or heating a little liquid is often convenient. Tin cups may become dark and may be marked by metal spoons or spatulas.

A cup designed for measuring liquids has a rim above the "full cup" line to keep the liquid from spilling over. There is often a pouring lip, which is a convenience.

Cups for measuring dry ingredients have no rim or lip. They are to be filled to overflowing and leveled off with a straight-edged spatula or knife. This is the accurate, quick way of measuring flour or sugar, and is good, too, for shortening.

For measuring fractions of a cup of dry ingredients or fats, nested sets of cups are handy. They too can be leveled off. A set usually consists of four measures of ¼-, ⅓-, ½-, and 1-cup capacities. Nested, they save storage space, but it is sometimes more convenient to split up a set and keep the different measures where they are most used.

Nested cups are of aluminum, tinware, or plastic. Those that are rounded to a small bottom are easier to remove shortening from than broad-bottomed ones, but they tip more easily.

On measuring cups look for markings that are easy to read. Aluminum and tin measures have indented markings. On glass measures and some plastic ones, markings may be molded into the outside, or glass cups may be marked with permanent, easily read colored lines and letters. Markings for thirds should be opposite from those for fourths to lessen chance of error in reading.

Handles of glass measures are molded with the cups and shaped like pitcher handles. Plastic cups also have molded handles, often smaller, earlike ones. Aluminum measures usually have handles that are riveted on. They may be pitcher-type, of aluminum, or more like a saucepan handle with a grip made of wood. Whatever the type of handle, be sure it is large enough to be grasped easily but not so heavy that it will tip the cup. When measuring hot food, handles of glass or wood are more comfortable than those of metal.

• **Larger measures.** Many jobs can be done more quickly with a measure larger than 1-cup size. Farm women who do much canning or freezing usually need a 1-pint and 1-quart measure. City women may have less use for the large size measures, though a glass quart

Mixing bowls of aluminum, enameledware, stainless steel, glass, and pottery. The glass quart measure also makes a convenient mixing bowl.

measure with rounded bottom is useful for mixing and pouring batters.

The larger measures, like the smaller ones, may be had in glass, aluminum, or tinware, and sometimes in enameledware also. Gallon measures come in tin or enameledware.

Mixing bowls

Bowls ranging in size from a pint to 4 quarts are needed in every kitchen. Nested sets make for compact storage, but it is much more convenient, if cupboard space permits, to have bowls side by side on a shelf rather than nested.

Mixing bowls are often made of glass or pottery; there are some of aluminum, enameledware, plastic, or stainless steel. Bowls of glass and pottery are heavier to lift than the others but they "stay put" better while mixing is being done.

A lightweight bowl to be used for mixing batters needs a handle or a rim that is wide enough to grasp. Pottery bowls with pitcher handles and pouring spouts are favorites with some women.

Bowls may have quite straight or rather sloping sides. Those with sloping sides may be easier to mix in, but batters tend more to spill over the top during beating. For beating a small amount of food with a rotary beater, a bowl should be narrow at the bottom so food will be deep enough for the beater blades to reach. For thorough beating, mixing bowls must have rounded bottoms.

Heat-resistant glass or pottery bowls can serve as baking dishes when needed. Smaller bowls that can be used as refrigerator dishes are double-purpose ones, too.

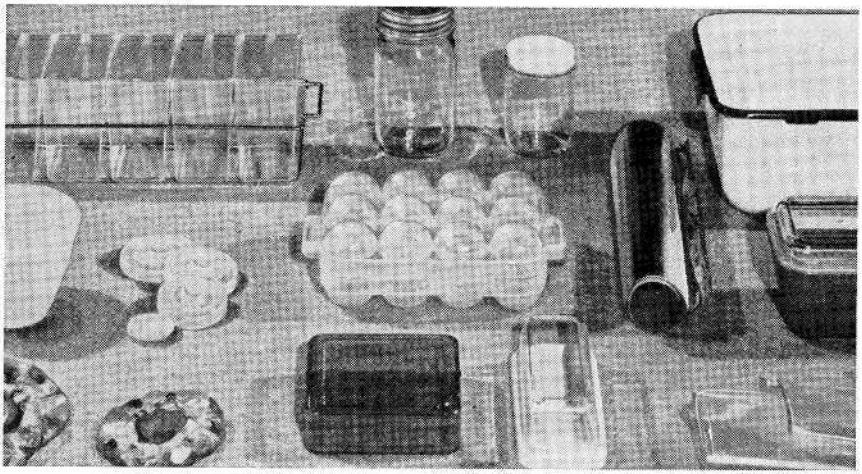
Food storage containers

To keep food in good condition in the home requires a variety of storage containers. Whatever the type, the containers should be so designed that their contents are readily available.

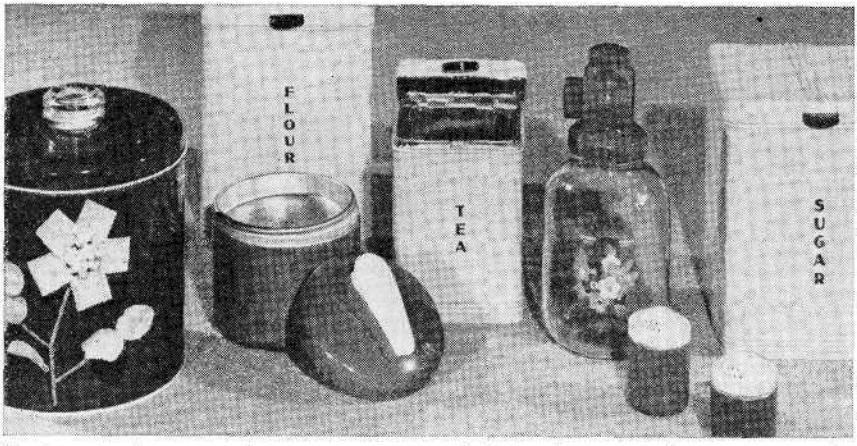
• **Refrigerator containers.** Most refrigerators now on the market are equipped with covered vegetable crispers and pans for meat storage. More expensive models may have other containers as well, but additional dishes in a range of sizes are needed for the many foods that go into a refrigerator. Covered dishes prevent drying out of food and exchange of flavors.

Glass, enameledware, and plastic are the materials most often used in refrigerator dishes. They are smooth and easy to clean and not affected by moisture in the refrigerator. With transparent glass and plastics, the contents of the dish can be easily seen. Often these transparent materials are used for covers of containers of other materials. Heat-resistant glass, enameledware, and oven-type pottery that can also be used for heating foods are especially convenient for left-overs.

Refrigerator dishes may be purchased in sets or individually. Sets usually include containers of different sizes. Uniformly shaped dishes that come in sets in a wire rack are easy to get at and take up little space. Flat dishes that can be stacked are space savers, too. Glass jars—they may be regular canning jars or those in which food is purchased—are also good for refrigerator use, especially if they have wide mouths.



Refrigerator containers of plastic, glass, and enameledware—including a set in wire rack, jars, vegetable crisper, egg and butter containers, and plastic bags; also bowl covers and aluminum foil for wrapping food.



Canister to keep crackers crisp, a set with hinged covers, dispensing jar for coffee, and range set—grease can and salt and pepper shakers.

If your refrigerator does not have a vegetable crisper, you may want large covered pans for fresh vegetable storage. Or plastic bags may be used for vegetables, and for fruits, left-over roasts, and other foods that are irregular in shape. The bags accommodate themselves to their contents so no space is wasted. Aluminum foil is useful for wrapping many foods and for covering dishes that have no covers of their own. It is often practical to have specially designed containers for foods such as eggs and butter or margarine.

● **Containers for dry staple foods.** Food supplies stored on cupboard shelves need closely covered containers to protect them from dust, excessive moisture, and insects. Painted metal and plastics are the materials most often used; both are satisfactory. Transparent canisters reveal their contents; others need labels.

Canisters come in sets of three or four of various sizes. Sometimes the covers are hinged on but usually they are not attached. Covers should fit fairly snugly. One that comes off too easily may not be tight enough to protect food.

In humid climates, containers with built-in moisture absorbers are convenient for keeping such foods as crackers and potato chips dry and crisp. This type of container has a removable holder for the granulated, moisture-absorbing material so that it can be heated in the oven occasionally to restore its effectiveness.

For ground coffee a tight container is needed to keep the coffee from losing flavor. Some women find dispensing containers timesaving and a help in making uniform coffee. These dispensers are made so that a flip of a lever or turn of a knob delivers a measured amount of coffee—the amount most people like for each cup.

Dishwashing equipment

Because dishwashing is a job that must be done over and over, it deserves good tools. The right equipment for doing it easily and well can keep it from being a disagreeable task.

• **Dishpans.** In dishpans you have a choice of aluminum, white or dark enameledware, or tinware. In an aluminum pan it is well to select one with a stain-resisting finish which will not be darkened by soaps or dishwashing powders and will not mark the sink.

Dishpans may be had with capacities ranging from 8 to 16 quarts and measuring from about 13 to 19 inches in the longest dimension. You will want a pan large enough to accommodate your dishes, but it must also fit into your sink, if that is where you use it. You need to consider also the amount of water the pan will hold. If you must conserve water you will find that the same amount can be used to better advantage in a smaller pan where it is fairly deep than in a broad pan where it is rather shallow. Other uses that you may have for your dishpan will also help you to decide on size.

There is a choice, too, in the shape of dishpans. The round pan is the most common, but oval pans or oblong ones with rounded corners often fit better into a sink.

If you must do much lifting and carrying of a filled dishpan, you will

Dishpans—round, oval, and rectangular. There are sizes for every need.

want one with handles you can hold easily. Otherwise you may prefer a pan with a rolled edge, which will take up a little less storage space. The edge should be broad enough to afford a good finger grip, and if you hang the pan on a hook for storage it should have a hole for the purpose.

● **Draining racks.** Much of the work of drying dishes and laundering towels can be saved by using a draining rack. Hot water poured over the dishes in the rack serves the double purpose of rinsing off soap and heating the dishes so they will air-dry in a short time. Dishes and cooking utensils can be dried in this way, and so can glassware and silver if the water used is soft. Using one of the synthetic detergents instead of soap, especially in hard water, may help prevent streaking of dishes that are air-dried.

It is worth while to invest in a good draining rack—a poor one can be a nuisance. Select one that is sturdy enough to be secure and firm even when loaded with dishes so that dishes will not be likely to knock against each other if the rack is lifted. See that plate supports are sturdy and so arranged that edges of plates will not touch the drainboard or drain pan. Look for a silverware holder with meshes close enough so that pieces will not slip through.

Rubber-covered racks are easier on dishes than those of tinned wire. Usually they are sturdier too, but there is a wide difference in quality. Look for smooth unbroken rubber coating that is fairly thick. Be sure that the rubber is a type that will not be softened by grease or hardened by heat.

In selecting size, consider where you will use the rack as well as the number of dishes it will hold. The most convenient place for a draining rack is in one bowl of a double-bowl sink, in one end of a large sink, or on a drainboard that drains water directly into the sink.

● **Draining trays.** You may find a draining tray a convenience if you do not have a double-bowl sink or a sloping sink drainboard. A tray can be used on a table or counter that fits snugly against the sink and is as high as the sink rim. It has three low sides and an open end which can be extended over the sink.

Draining trays come in aluminum, rubber, or plastic. If you choose one of plastic, be sure it is a type that will not be damaged by almost boiling water.

● **Draining pans.** If you wash dishes at a table you need a pan to set the draining rack into—one that is deep enough to catch the rinse water. It may be of aluminum or enameledware. You will find many other uses for such a pan. It makes a good tray for carrying things to or from cellar or pantry; it will be in constant use when you are preparing food for freezing or canning; it may even double as a roasting pan for the big holiday turkey.

• **Sink strainers.** Many a plumbing difficulty can be averted by the regular use of a sink strainer. Sink strainers are usually triangular in shape to fit into a corner of a sink. The strainer should have supports to hold it slightly above the sink bottom so that it will drain readily.

The material may be enameledware, aluminum, special hard rubber, or plastic. Aluminum should be the stain-resisting type; rubber, a type not softened by grease. A plastic strainer may warp if boiling hot liquids are poured into it.

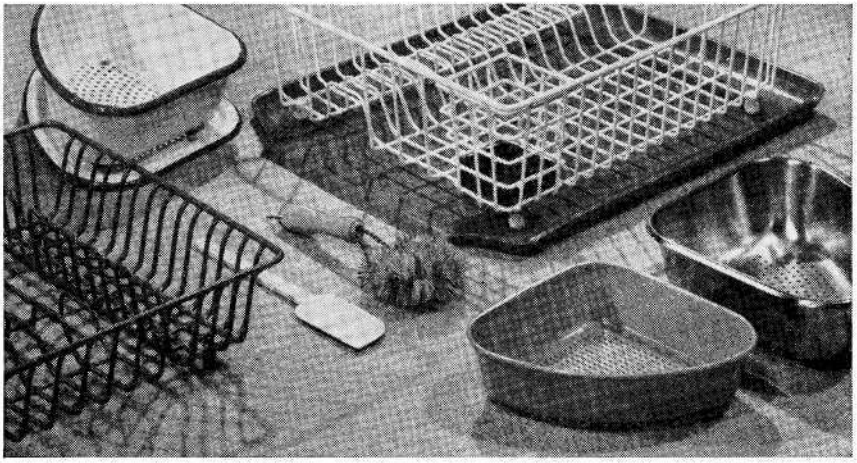
Wash the strainer at each dishwashing time. If you pour acid or soured food into the strainer, lift it and flush the sink under it as soon as the food has drained. Acids left standing on porcelain enamel are likely to roughen it.

• **Rubber scrapers.** A dishwashing accessory that, once used, often becomes indispensable is the rubber scraper—sometimes called a rubber spatula. It removes so much of the food waste from dishes that dishwater is kept free of scraps, crumbs, and grease. The scraper is just right, too, for scraping the last bit of batter, whipped cream, or salad dressing from a bowl.

• **Brushes.** For use at the sink there are many kinds of brushes of fiber or nylon. The nylon may be more expensive but it can be expected to last longer. Nylon is very easy to clean.

A vegetable brush is useful for loosening food that has stuck to pans. It is especially good for removing cooked-on milk and egg from pans that might be scratched by harsh cleaning pads.

You may want other brushes for special uses such as washing bottles or cream separators. Choose them according to your needs.



Draining racks and tray, sink strainers, rubber scraper, and brush.

A set of kitchen utensils

The following lists—including pots and pans as well as food preparation and dishwashing equipment—may help the homemaker who is equipping a kitchen, adding new utensils, or making replacements. The lists were developed from the experience of homemakers as shown by a recent survey. Utensils used at least once a week in at least half the homes are starred (*). These make up a minimum set. A recommended set includes the other pieces used once a week or more by at least a quarter of the women. If you have still others that you use often, they belong in your set.

The pictures on these two pages include all utensils listed. The pieces were chosen to show variety in materials and designs. You may prefer other materials or designs for your utensils.

Tools for food preparation and dishwashing

*1 beater, rotary.
*1 bottle and jar opener.
*1 can opener (for tin cans).
*1 colander.
*1 cutting board.
1 flour sifter.
1 food chopper (crank type).
1 food mincer (blade type).
1 food press.
*1 fork, 2 tines, long handle.
1 grater and shredder set.
*1 knife, bread or slicing, 8-inch blade.
*1 knife, butcher, 7- or 8-inch blade.
*1 knife, case.
*1 knife, paring.
*1 knife sharpener.
*1 ladle.
*1 measure, 1 cup.
*1 measure, 1 pint.
*1 measure, 1 quart.
*1 set measures, ¼-, ⅓-, ½-, and 1-cup.

Tools for food preparation and dishwashing—Continued

*1 mixing bowl, 1 pint.
*1 mixing bowl, 1 quart.
*1 mixing bowl, 2 quart.
*1 mixing bowl, 4 quart.
*1 orange or fruit juicer or reamer.
*1 pan, round, 12-inch.
*1 potato or food masher.
*1 rolling pin.
*1 spatula, 7-inch blade.
*1 spoon, basting, long handle.
*1 spoon, perforated mixing, long handle.
*1 spoon, wooden, 11-inch.
1 spoon, wooden, 15-inch.
*1 set spoons, measuring.
*1 strainer to fit top of cup.
*1 strainer, medium size, medium mesh.
*1 turner, pancake, long handle.
*1 dish drainer.
*1 dishpan.
*1 sink strainer.
*1 pan to fit under dish drainer or second dishpan.
*1 vegetable brush.

Pans for range-top and oven use

*1 coffee maker, size and type to suit family.
*1 double boiler.
*1 fry pan, 10- to 12-inch diameter.
*1 fry pan, 8-inch diameter.
1 griddle.
*1 kettle with lid , 8-quart.
*1 saucepan, 1-quart.
1 saucepan, 3-cup to 3-quart capacity as needed.
*1 saucepan, 3-quart.
*1 saucepan or saucepot, 4-quart.
1 teakettle.
*1 teapot.
1 baking pan, about 10 by 14 inches.
1 bread pan.
*2 cake pans, layer, 8- or 9-inch.
1 cake pan, square, 8- or 9-inch.
*1 casserole with lid.
*1 cooky sheet.
1 cooky sheet (additional).
*1 cooling rack.
1 cooling rack (additional).
*6 custard cups.
1 muffin pan, 8- to 12-cup.
*2 pie pans.
*1 pudding pan, 9-inch.
1 roaster.

Index to kitchen tools

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