



VIRGIN TO VETERAN

HOW TO GET COOKING WITH CONFIDENCE

SAM STERN





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INTRODUCTION

THE VIRGIN KITCHEN SETUP

Vegetables AND SALAD

Chicken

BEEF

PORK

LAMB

Fish and Shellfish

EGGS AND DAIRY

PASTA, NOODLES,

RICE, AND *Couscous*

BREAD AND CAKES

Desserts

Cooking has to be one of the greatest pleasures of all time; it's creative, it's fun, it's relaxing, and it's social. It's the ideal excuse for getting mates and family around. It's also an ideal activity on purely selfish grounds. Cooking for yourself means you get to make informed choices about what you eat. When you're feeling greedy you can indulge (but in a good way). When you're training for a marathon or just want to get yourself fit you can cook and eat to take greater care of yourself. It saves loads of time: yes, a great home cooked meal can be thrown together from scratch in less time than it takes to take delivery of a pizza. And those long slow cook recipes are the perfect opportunity to do something chilling while your roast is sizzling away in a very low oven. But if you're just starting out of course can feel daunting. So think of *Virgin to Veteran* as a personal masterclass. I'm not a professional chef but I've been a passionate cook since I can remember. I've cooked in all kinds of kitchens (at home, college, all over the place) and I cook every meal from scratch as I totally believe that you are what you eat and that every meal you eat has to earn its place on your plate. So I've structured the book to be relevant, (only foods you'd really want to eat), comprehensive (I've pulled together loads of key information in the introductions to each chapter), and easy to follow. You'll find each recipe moves logically through every step you'll need to take. It encourages you to be creative. And it starts with a guide to setting up a workable kitchen—a place where you can bang on the music and get into cooking with confidence.

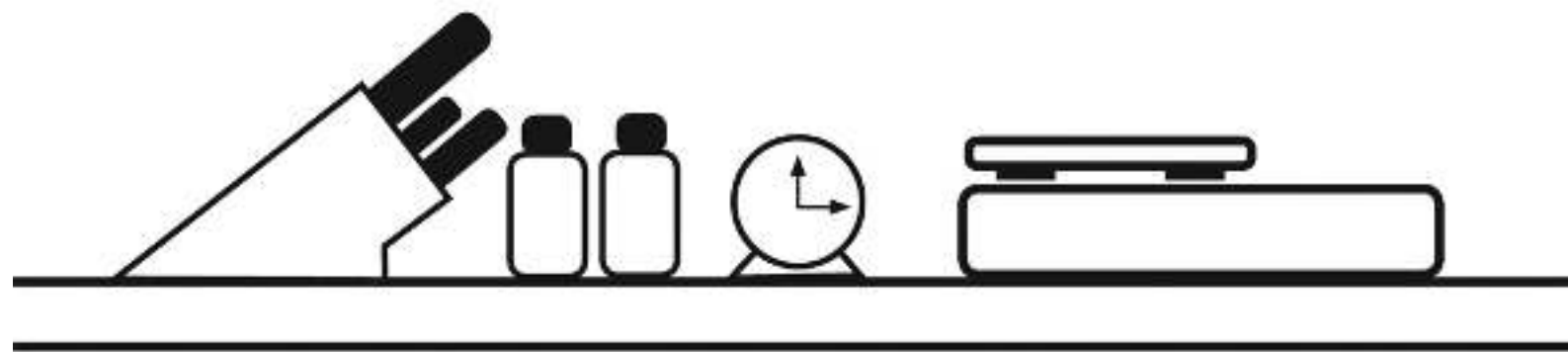
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THE VIRGIN KITCHEN SETUP

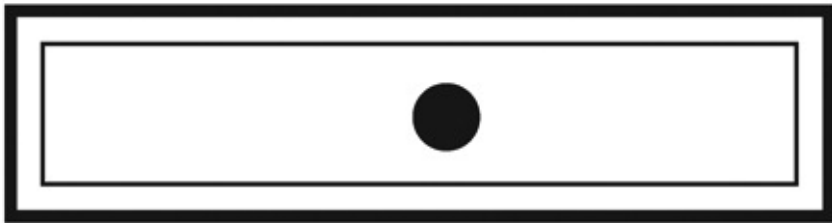
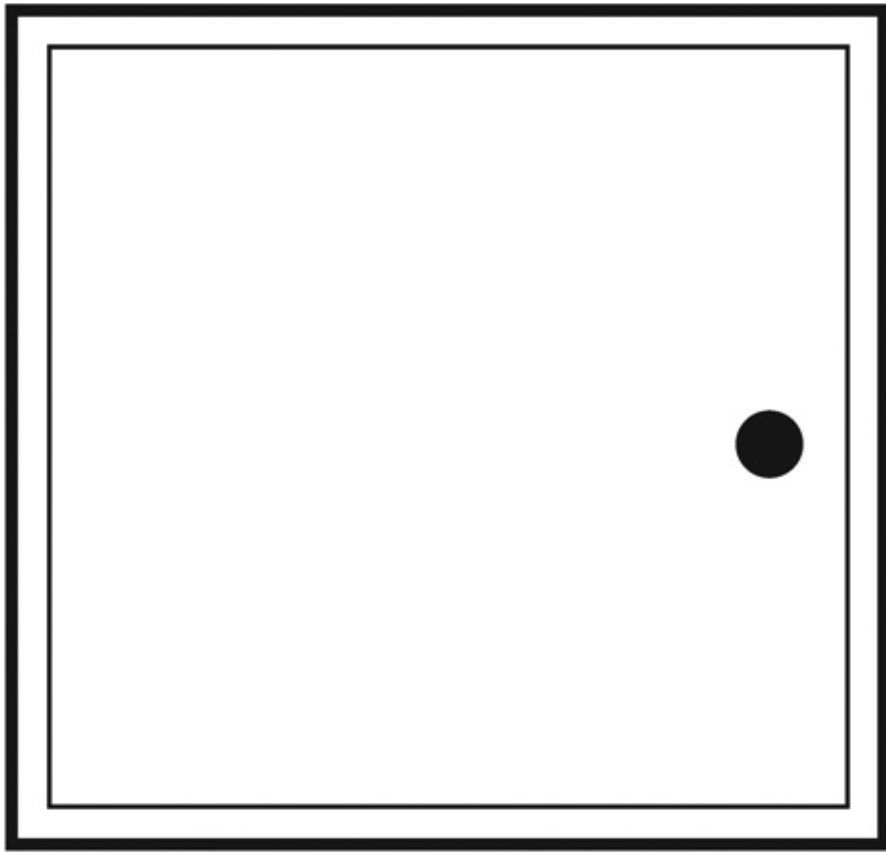
THE KNIFE SET Knives are like an extension of your arm: you need them close to your board. I'm right handed so that's where I put my knife block. Use the appropriate one for the job (p9). Don't store them in the drawer—it ruins the blades and it's dangerous. Keep them in a block or on a wall-mounted magnetic strip, or in a chef's roll instead.

SEASONINGS Sometimes I'll put these on a tray, sometimes they'll be grouped together. Clear a space to put any appropriate oils, vinegars, spices, dried herbs, a lemon, salt, and pepper.

THE TIMER Check you've got a reliable timer available: bang it on the counter where you can't miss it, set the timing function on your oven, or set your cell phone; if you're wandering off when something tasty's cooking you don't want to forget it.



THE COUNTER Ideally you want 31½ by 31½ inches free space on your counter—basically the reach of your arm all around. You'll be doing all your prepping here, so it needs to be clear of clutter. If there's a power point near that's good.



THE CUTTING BOARD It's not glamorous but a good board anchors your cooking. It'll help you master fast, precise cutting and won't ruin your knives (cheap plastic ones do). Get two. A tight grained wooden one (1–2 inches thick) for all your vegetable work and a plastic one to use for prepping raw fish and meat.

KITCHEN SCALES For me these have to be digital, but it's your choice (p8). Have them handy—especially for baking where you will be needing to measure absolutely everything.

SETTING UP YOUR BASE KITCHEN

Go into any kitchen store and there are thousands of bits of equipment begging “buy me.” Who needs them? You don't. What you do need is an organized space, the right bits for the job, a workable refrigerator, and smartly stocked shelves and cupboards. Get this lot sorted and get yourself cooking...

TOOLS OF THE TRADE



HARDWARE ESSENTIALS

These are the hand tools I find myself using all the time. Get them cheap from any specialist kitchen store. Rather than lose them in drawers, I stick them in pots and sit them by my board then shift them across to the stove when I'm working there.

WOODEN SPOONS For turning/beating/creaming/mixing. Long cool handles won't burn your hands and the ends won't melt. Hand-wash.

METAL SPOONS For measuring and baking. Don't use them in pans, they'll scratch.

LONG METAL SKEWER For testing steak/roasts/chops for doneness. Cheap and it works.

SLOTTED SPOON For draining and lifting food out of oil/liquids/stir-fries.

BALLOON WHISK For whipping cream/meringue/egg whites, etc. Helps make the smoothest of sauces.

TONGS For quick and easy turning, shifting meat, and other slippery things in and out of hot pans or lifting spaghetti onto dishes. A key tool in your arsenal.

SPATULA Use to turn food. Made in metal and nylon (for nonstick pans) their wide, slotted head and off-set angle is ideal for turning and shifting.

FISH SLICE Designed to slide easily under a whole bit of fish so you can turn it neatly (the solid head helps). Use for wide food like chicken schnitzel or small roasts.

THIN SPATULA Slide under cookies to release from the pan or use to frost cakes. It's long, narrow, and very thin, so perfect for lifting food like steaks to check for doneness.

RUBBER SPATULA Has flexibility and at least one rounded tip to retrieve all the batter from the cake bowl/sauce from the pan.

POTATO RICER A giant garlic press for potatoes. Inexpensive. Makes the best, driest mashed potato.

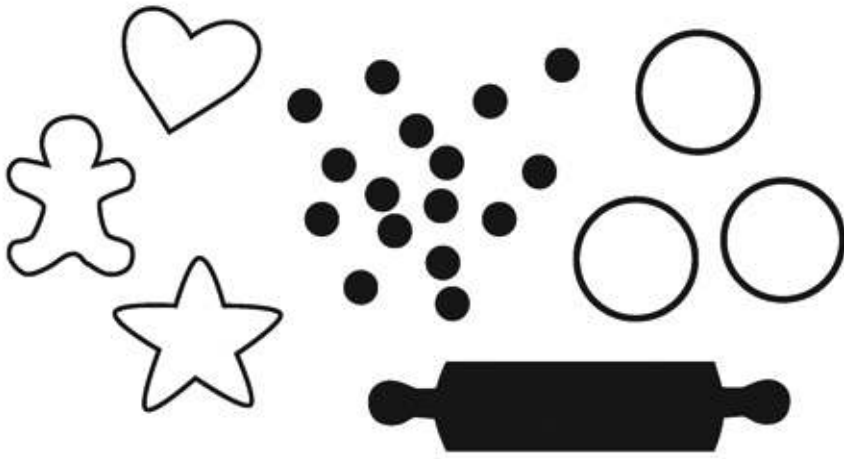
LADLE For moving soups and other liquids (eg. Crepe mix/eggs for omelet) into or out of the pan.

PEELER Use to peel potatoes and other veg. Cuts carrots/zucchini/cucumber into ribbons; makes chocolate curls/Parmesan shavings.

MICROPLANE GRATER For fine grating hard cheese/citrus zest.

GARLIC CRUSHER What it suggests. Does it fast. Alternatively, use a chef's knife (p9).

SILICONE BRUSH Nifty. Use to brush eggwash/glaze on pie dough; grease pans/dishes/soufflé dishes; brush oil onto food; re-apply a marinade.



HARDWARE DRAWER

Some gear here you could improvise...

ROLLING PIN For rolling out pie dough/thinning meats, and crushing dry ingredients (or use a clean wine bottle instead).

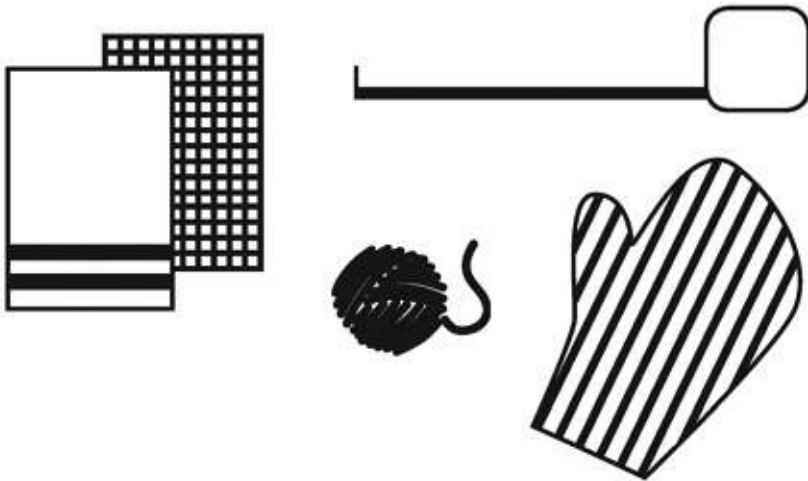
TWEEZERS For nipping bones out of fish (if using eyebrow tweezers sterilize them).

COOKIE CUTTERS For cookies/scones/big ravioli (or use a paring knife/thin glass). Can also be used as cook's rings.

PIE WEIGHTS For baking tarts blind (or use ceramic baking beans or dried lima beans/rice).

APPLE CORER Neat and fast (or cut around the core with a paring knife).

COOK'S RINGS Shape rice/salad/rosti other cheap eats to create height. Looks impressive.



SOFTWARE DRAWER

Bits you'll take for granted but are so useful (often essential). I always keep a dish towel handy for shifting things fast, hanging onto small or slippery dishes that oven mitts won't hold, protecting my hands against hot handles, and mopping spills.

DISH TOWELS For blotting salad greens/covering dough; wiping hands; protecting.

OVEN MITTS Get them thick enough and check your hands can move in them.

PAPER TOWELS Draining fried food/French fries; drying veg and salad; wiping pans out.

TAPE MEASURE For measuring the bottom of cake and tart pans for accurate baking.

WAX PAPER/BAKING PARCHMENT For lining pans; cooking food in paper.

PLASTIC WRAP Covering and wrapping: thinning meats; perfect shaped poached eggs.

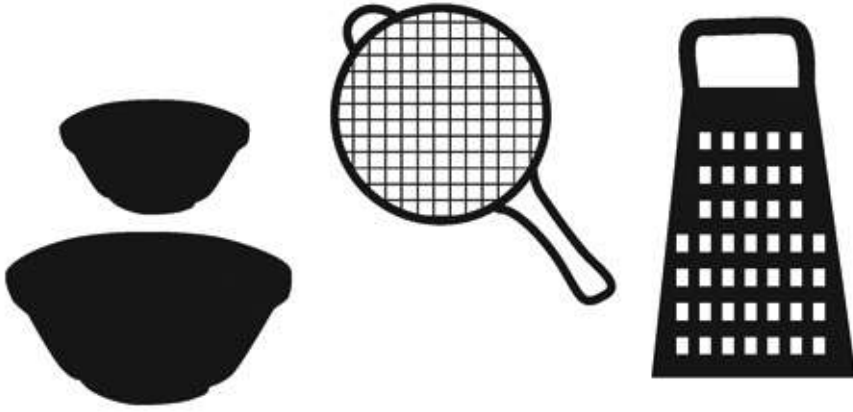
STRING Measuring pans; tying a bouquet garni, cuffing chicken legs.

FOIL For protecting food during cooking; wrapping; protecting a resting roast; cooking food in foil packages.

FREEZER BAGS Come in all sizes. Get labels for freezer and use a freezer pen.

CHEESE CLOTH Cheap cloth used to make cheese; fine straining liquid for jellies.

PASTRY BAG For decorating cakes; shaping meringue; piping mash.



ON THE SHELF (or in the cupboard)

Some of your hardest working items, bowls especially.

MIXING BOWLS 1 × 4 quart and 3 smaller for stacking: Pyrex is less likely to scratch than plastic (essential if using to whisk egg whites) or to absorb smells: use it for mixing/freezing/reheating/melting chocolate/making sauces over hot water.

MEASURING CUPS AND PITCHERS For measuring/mixing liquids, controlled pouring for sauces/mayo.

COLANDER For draining anything. Use as a fruit bowl or over pan as a steamer.

SIFT For sifting flours, etc. for baking/draining vegetables. Use to puree fruit.

BOX GRATER For grating cheese/vegetables, etc.

MORTAR AND PESTLE For bashing marinades/smashing spices.

GRINDER For grinding your own meat. Makes a radical difference.

PASTA MACHINE Reasonably cheap and gives impressive results.



GET HOOKED

hang your pots and pans for space, time, accessibility.



POTS AND PANS

Poor pans won't do your techniques proud: if you're buying new you want a good surface, a weight to suit your hand, and metal handles so you can fry and bake. Thick bottoms mean your food is less likely to burn and you'll keep in control. Nonstick are easier to use but don't last as long.

LIDDED SAUTÉ PAN For sautés (high-heat frying/tossing food) and stews/sauces.

GRIDDLE PAN Pan-grills fast and healthier than frying. Like an indoor barbecue.

OVENPROOF SKILLET Metal handled. For fry-bake recipes and standard fry.

PASTA PAN Needs to be big. Convert to a steamer/use for stocks.

MEDIUM SAUCEPAN For making soups/sauces, boiling potatoes.

SMALL SAUCEPAN For cooking eggs, small amounts of vegetables or heating milk.

WOK For stir-fries, also good for deep-frying but it'll need a flat bottom.

CRÊPE PAN Easy in and out for pancakes and good for flatbread.

OMELET PAN Neat 6-inch pan: just the right size and multitasks.



DISHES

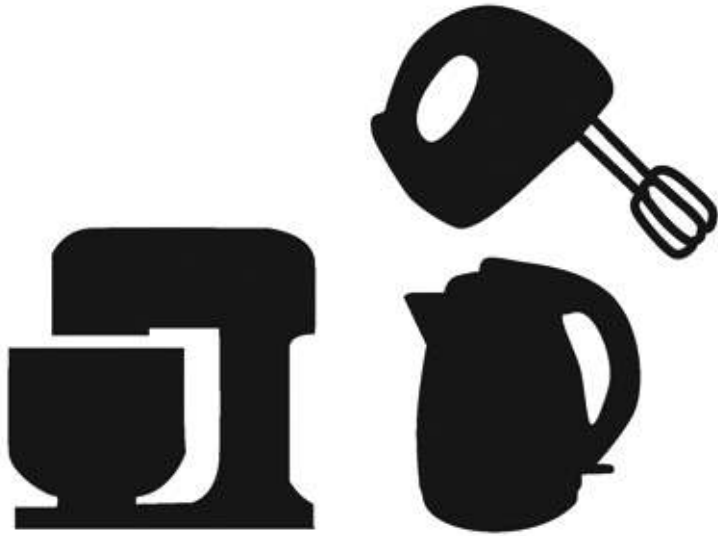
Don't go mad: see how few you can get away with: raid prokitchen stores for value.

CASSEROLE DISH Get the size to suit your needs. I like using wider ones.

LARGE SHALLOW BAKING DISH For bakes/lasagna/roasting vegetables.

RAMEKINS For prep storage/desserts/soufflés/baked eggs.

MUGS, CUPS, PLATES, AND BOWLS Use your usual stuff for mixing, prepping, and serving.



PLUG-INS

You can do pretty much everything in the kitchen by hand but there are times when it's good to get a machine to share the effort...

KETTLE For tea/boiling up water to pour into pan for vegetables/making up stock.

STICK BLENDER Blends soups/hummus/bread crumbs/sauces.

ELECTRIC HAND MIXER For mixing and whisking cakes/eggs/sauces.

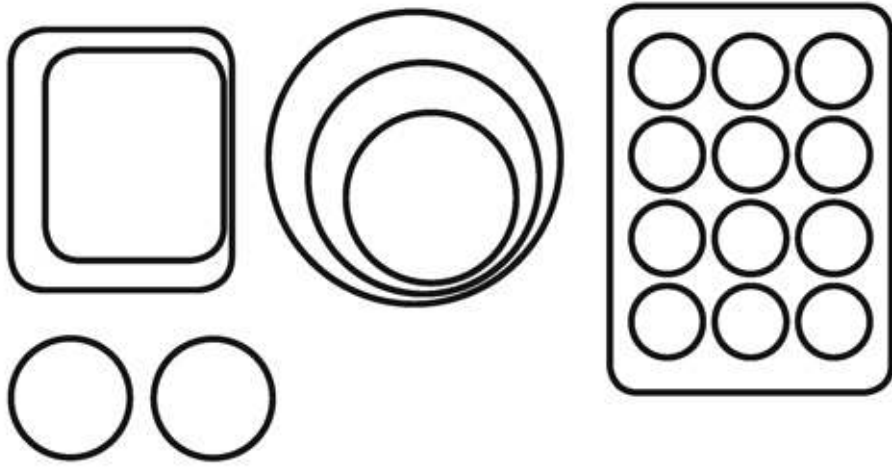
FREESTANDING MIXER Brilliant for mixing bread/pizza dough/cake batters.

PROCESSOR Does a bit of everything. Best for mixing pie dough.

BLENDER Fast and very efficient. Cool food a bit before using and never overfill.

DEEP-FAT FRYER A safer way to deal with deep-fry.

ICE-CREAM MACHINE Opens up the world of homemade ice cream. I love mine.



PANS AND THINGS

No rules here, except get a roasting pan that's thick enough to use on your stove and thick baking sheets which don't buckle in the heat for pizza.

ROASTING PANS Get one big enough to take a chicken plus vegetables and a smaller one.

YORKSHIRE PUDDING PAN 4 individual holes, or use a muffin pan or smaller roasting pan.

TART PANS Get bigger (9 inches) and individual (4 inches) for sweet and savory tarts/quiche.

LOAF PANS For bread/loaf-shaped cake/teabreads. Get a 1-pound or 2-pound one.

BAKING SHEETS For pizza/cookies/scones/finishing/reheating food/catching drips.

CAKE PANS Get 1 × 8½-inch round pan for proper cakes, 2 × 7 inches for sponge cakes.

SPRINGFORM CHEESECAKE PAN Springform means the cake is easily released.

WIRE RACK Avoid the bottom of new baking getting damp: get a higher one or elevate what you've got.

GETTING THE MEASURE

Accurate measuring gives you a confident base to work from when you're starting out. It's about getting the balance of ingredients right. Having a carrot-heavy casserole for example is not a disaster but exact measurement is more crucial in baking. If the amount of raising agent's wrong or the egg/fat/flour ratio is out your cake may not be as light as it could be. Use imperial/metric, cups, spoons, US cup measurements, old-school scales with weights, electronic jobs with loads of extras like thermometer, timer, whatever—as long as it's easy to read, fits into your space, and is above all accurate. Once you're fully into it, you'll find you can start to judge your measurements by eye. Recipes are written in a mix of measurements: check online for conversions for dry weight and liquid volumes, or use an app or an oven magnet instead.



EMERGENCY ROOM

FIRE BLANKET Keep one handy just in case; throw over a burning pan if it's safe (never use water and don't try to pick the pan up and run with it).

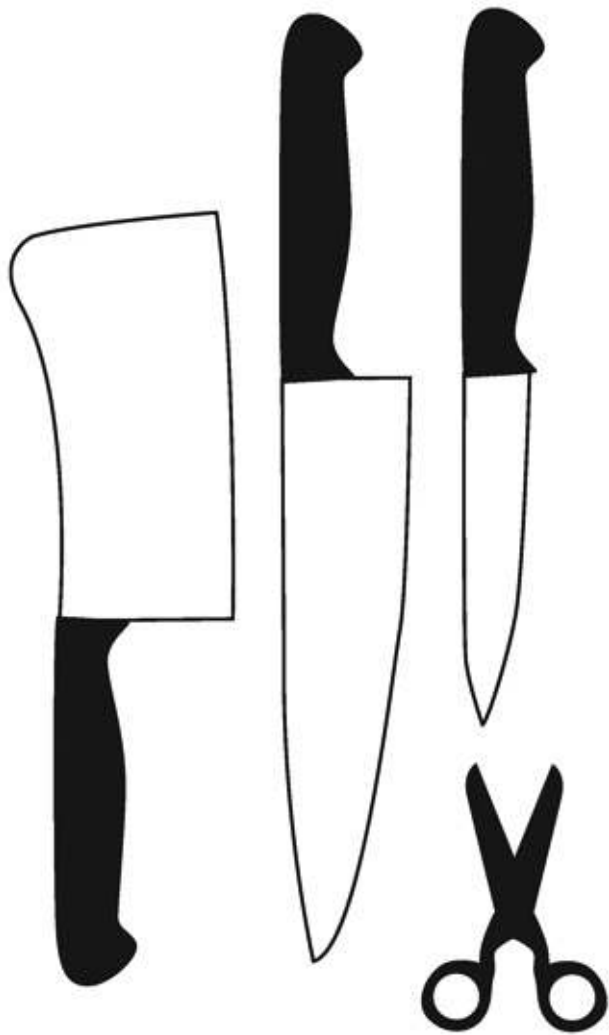
CELL PHONE Call for help if there's a real problem; better safe than sorry.

PLASTERS For small nicks; happens to the best of us but take care.

COLD WATER For very minor burns; hold under cold running water. For worse; call for help.

CUTTING THINGS

A good-quality knife makes all the difference in the kitchen. It should be balanced in your hand, not too heavy, razor sharp, and with a good grip. Don't think you need to be getting the most expensive: some Japanese handmade beauties are highly desirable but maybe something to work up to. A reasonably priced stainless steel knife with a fully forged reinforced blade is easily found in kitchen stores.



THE ONES FOR THE JOB

CHEF'S KNIFE A multi-purpose broad blade. Good for precision cutting/dicing/slicing/chopping/cubing/light butchery.

PARING KNIFE A small short-handled blade useful for smaller jobs. Use to trim and prepare vegetables/fruit/cheese.

BREAD KNIFE A serrated blade for doing the obvious effortlessly. Also good for cutting butternut squash/pineapple/eggplants.

CARVING KNIFE A long, thin blade perfect for carving neat, wafer-thin slices of meat.

FILLETING KNIFE A long, thin, flexible blade. The give in the blade lets you work cleanly to lift raw fish off the bone.

BONING KNIFE A long, narrow slightly curved blade with a sharp tip. Only used for boning meat, so only needed if you're into butchery.

CLEAVER A big, heavy knife with a very broad blade. Use for heavy jobs (e.g. Chopping through ribs/bone) which would damage other blades.

SCISSORS Endlessly useful. Use to clean and trim fish; butterfly small chicken; snip string/chives/bacon. Get a good strong pair from a specialist kitchen store.

BLUNT KITCHEN KNIFE Use to run around the edge of pans to loosen your baking.

CUTTING RULES

- Check your knife is sharp enough—treat it to the steel if not.
- Check your hand and the knife handle aren't greasy.
- Always chop on your board.
- If doing a lot of knife work, sit a damp dish towel under your board to keep it steady.
- Grip the knife well: put it comfortably in your hand; sit your thumb to the side of the handle, never on top of it.
- Wash knives by hand and dry immediately.

KNIFE SHARPENING

Keep your blades in best shape and your knives will last: more importantly you'll get maximum performance out of them and they'll be safer (blunt knives slip). Use a steel—a rod of high-carbon steel on a handle—on all nonserrated blades for longevity, safety, and sharp techniques. Do it every time you use your knife so it never blunts in the first place. If in doubt, ask your friendly butcher for an impromptu lesson.

- 1** Hold the steel comfortably in one hand. Point it up and away from you. Check your hand is safely behind the guard.
- 2** Take the knife in your other hand and cross the steel and blade just above their respective handles.
- 3** Firmly slide the knife at a 20-degree angle along the steel so its edge is honed from its base to tip. Repeat the process on the other side. Do it a few times until you're happy with the outcome. Wash the knife before using.

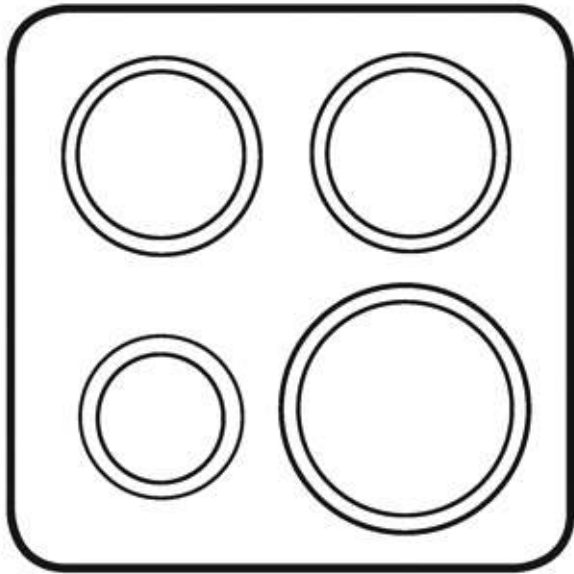
HEATING THINGS

THE OVEN

It's your best friend for baking, roasting, pan-baking, simple reheating; so, get to know it and then work with it. Fact is, every one is different. Gas, electric, or convection? That's just the start of it. Work out what sort of beast yours is and then work with it.

THE BROILER

An under-rated part of your arsenal: use for cooking steaks, chops, whole fish and fillets, kebabs, finishing omelets, gratins, cooking bacon. Slide the broiler pan and rack to the right position for high, medium, or slow-cook. Preheat to high; reduce to a temperature you judge appropriate. Brush prepped food lightly with oil (too much oil or a heavy marinade may flare up, so take care). Use oven mitts to slide the tray in and out. Broil food both sides until done: turn kebabs a few times. Broiling sends oil out into the atmosphere so use the extractor fan, open window, or consider griddling food then oven baking. Pros: broiling is healthy, the fat drains away. It can taste delicious (think in-door BBQ). Cons: food can dry out so watch it.



THE STOVE

The fast action station where you'll be developing your fundamental skills: griddling, frying, browning to seal and develop flavor, sautéing, reducing, stirring, whisking, adding, adjusting, seasoning, tasting things: cooking. So, keep tools, seasonings, oils, ingredients close by; get comfortable with using the right ring on the stove for the job and the pan; learn to adjust the heat through a recipe to get best results. Try switching between stove, broiler, and oven to achieve different results: pan-fry quickly then bake finish: start the omelet in the pan and finish under the broiler: mix and match.

OVEN *Rules*

USE THE TOP SHELF for quicker cooking/higher temperature dishes, middle for medium, and bottom for lower temperature/slower cooking dishes.

SET THE RACKS before you preheat.

ALWAYS PREHEAT THE OVEN at the right stage of your recipe.

CHECK THE TEMPERATURE IS REACHED before you put the food in.

If you're using a convection oven, **SET IT FOR 25°F LESS** than specified.

DON'T USE CONVECTION FOR BREAD (it disturbs the dough).

DON'T OPEN THE DOOR during cooking unless you have to.

CHECK FOR DONENESS if you need to toward the end of cooking.

OPEN AND CLOSE THE OVEN DOOR SLOWLY and gently to avoid air disturbance.

USE THE TIMER but don't trust it; it's only a machine.



Temperatures

Knowing how to shift from one temperature system to another means you can interpret any recipe with confidence. The recipes here give fahrenheit measures—for other systems check online.

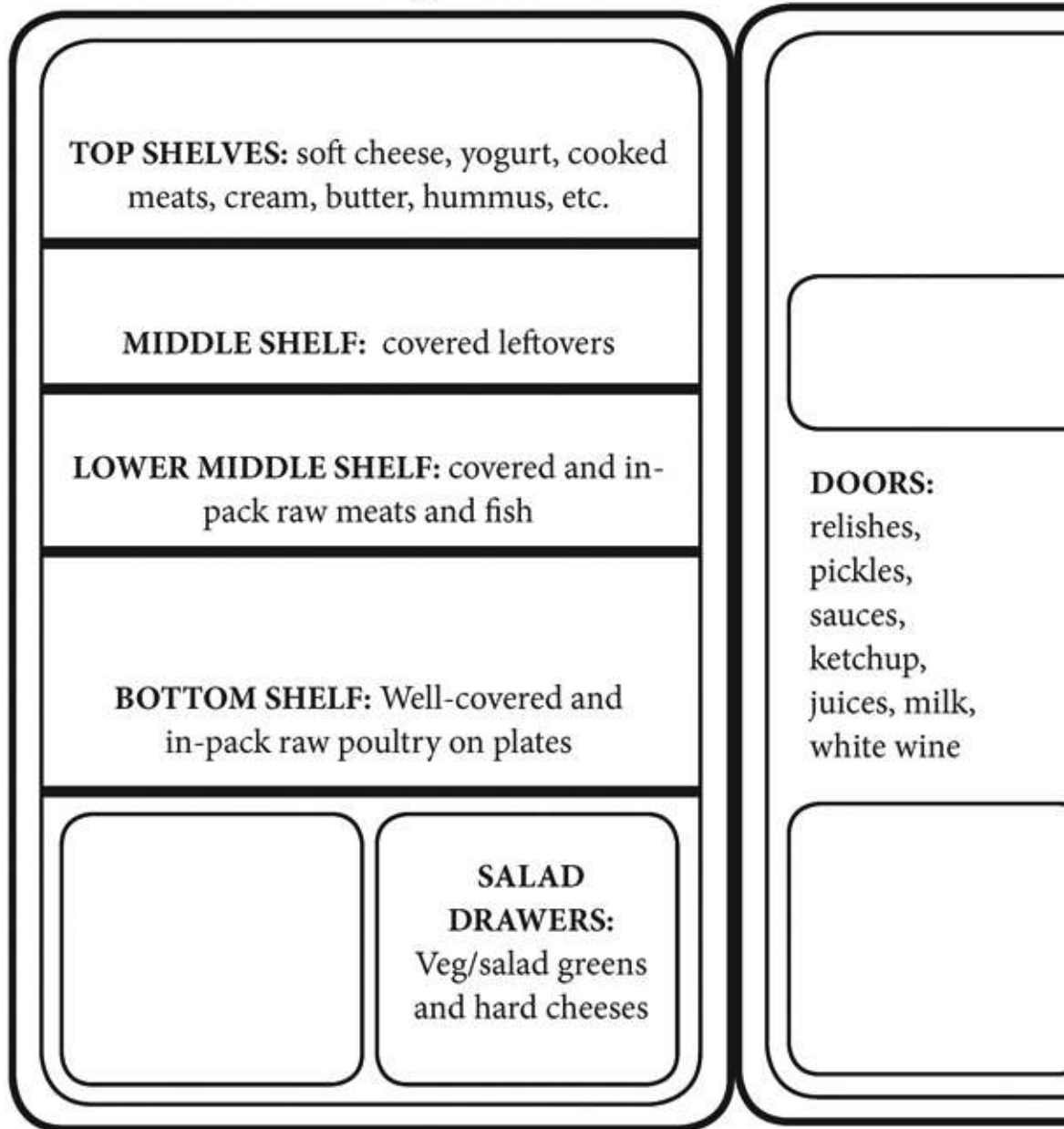
COOLING THINGS

REFRIGERATOR ETIQUETTE

- Check the temperature: just below 41°F is safe.
- Don't overfill it: it'll stop the airflow and alter the temperature.
- Sit smaller packs at the front so you can see to the back.
- Use old stuff before new: First In–First Out is the rule.
- Cool hot food down before storing it.
- Wrap things well to store: use storage boxes for stacking.
- Don't be a slave to sell-by dates: smell, touch, use your judgment.
- Dishes such as curry/stews/casseroles benefit from chilling for a day or two.
- Save time: rise dough in the refrigerator overnight: chill batter for breakfast pancakes.
- Wash it with soapy water: sprays taint flavors.
- Check individual chapters for refrigerator rules on specific ingredients.
- Defrost frozen food in the refrigerator overnight.

THE FREEZER

Something interesting happens when you start to cook: you get to love bits of equipment you've previously frozen out. Your freezer becomes less a graveyard for peas and ice cream, more an addictive resource; time-saver; cash-cow. Freeze the following things and all's good: homemade ready-meals like chili, casseroles, stews, meat and vegetable burgers, pies, pasta dishes, soups, tomato and meat sauces, pizza bases. Store byproducts of your efforts like stocks, pie dough, leftover egg whites and wine in ice-cube trays. Bang in frozen vegetables, berries, frozen fish, and shrimp; freeze whole emergency chicken: freeze bits of the bird (thighs, legs, breasts, wings) a steak, and a chop or two; homemade ice cream.



HOW TO Freeze stuff

- Check your items to freeze are properly cold.
- Set freezer to fast freeze: a quicker freeze means better results.
- Wrap food to be frozen up well in plastic wrap to protect against the arctic cold.
- Label the bags or boxes before you fill them.
- Freestanding bags are easy to pour/spoon food into.
- Freeze small bits of leftover sauce/gravy in ice-cube trays.
- Don't overfill freezer bags/boxes: two-thirds full is good.
- Fish is hard to freeze at home: best to buy already frozen.
- For easy access later, individually wrap steaks/burgers/chops in plastic wrap before putting in freezer bags.
- Freeze cakes and scones cooked (reheat the scones): freeze fruit pies uncooked and reheat.
- Don't freeze anything that's been frozen then thawed out.
- Don't cook raw food from frozen.

STORING THINGS



THE PANTRY

A revelation: when testing recipes for this book I was spending ages looking for the right dried herb. I've got dozens of pots and, eventually, I organized them alphabetically. I reckon it saved me minutes every day. It's an extreme example, but fact is when you can see what you've got you're going to use it; a storage space isn't just a load of shelves full of random things: looking at it should inspire you.

OILS Have a huge influence on your cooking. Some add positive flavor (olive, sesame, walnut); some are healthy (olive, canola), some are brilliant for frying and using at higher temperatures (peanut/sunflower/vegetable). Use the right one for the job but other than that it's down to taste. Store in a cooler, darker place in your pantry as oils do go off.

VINEGAR Not just for fries. Use white, red, cider, balsamic, and malt. Their acidity can make or break a salad dressing, add depth to a stew or sauce; raspberry adds a fruity note, tarragon is chic, Chinese wine lifts things.

SEASONINGS Sea salt is brilliant as it gives texture and bursts of flavor; grind it into cooking for even distribution, just keep it off the table. Black pepper is best freshly ground. Use lemon, lime, vinegars.

SPICES AND DRIED HERBS I keep a good few in as they're the fastest and easiest way to transform basic ingredients. Use in rubs and marinades, and sprinkle in different combinations; see what suits.

STOCK CUBES Keep good ones in for emergencies. Bear in mind the stock will be saltier than homemade, so adjust seasoning.

FLAVORINGS AND TOP SAUCES Keep English and Dijon mustard for dressings/sauces/mash; Worcestershire and anchovy sauces for a beefy touch to meat dishes; oyster, soy, hoisin, red bean paste, sweet chili, Thai fish sauce, for Chinese/Thai; harrisa paste for a spicy kick to marinades: mint jelly/sauce for lamb; horseradish, ketchup, brown sauce, passata, tamarind paste, and lime juice for the rest.

CANS AND JARS No kitchen's complete without tomatoes, chickpeas, lima beans, kidney beans, cannellini beans, corn, coconut milk, olives, capers, anchovies, jalapenos and sundried tomatoes.

DRIED BREAD CRUMBS Panko are best. Make your own (p201) or buy from Chinese stores.

DRIED PASTA Throw spaghetti, linguine, and penne in the pantry and dinner's always in.

SWEET THINGS Keep in thin honey for balancing sweet/sour in a sauce or stew, adding to

marinades/yogurt, drizzling over ice cream, cake glazing; red currant jelly for sweetening meat jus with citrus for an instant gravy; dark corn and maple syrup, blackstrap molasses, raspberry jam, and fig relish for the rest.

BAKING My baking cupboard features dried yeast, baking powder, baking soda, all-purpose and self-rising flour, bread flour (white and whole wheat), cornstarch, cocoa, oats, dried fruits, nuts, seeds, cocoa, 70% chocolate, crystallized ginger, custard powder, leaf gelatin for setting jellies, superfine/granulated/raw brown sugar, and vanilla. See p198–199 for more details.

TEA BAGS AND COFFEE For cooking and drinking.

HARD CIDER AND RED AND WHITE WINE (Sauvignon's good).

STORE LORE

- Use up old stuff before you buy new.
- Keep jars labeled and labels facing forward.
- Keep shorter things to the front of shelves.
- Organize ingredients to type: so, baking things in one area, oils and vinegars together, spices and dried herbs, pastas, noodles, rice, and other grains together, cans together, etc. Make it geographic.

COOKING THINGS

And so it begins: we've sorted out the kitchen, now for the recipes. Just a few points to remember...

- ☞ Make sure to **READ EACH RECIPE THROUGH** before you start so you won't miss a vital step like "the day before" or a key ingredient.
- ☞ Consider "**MISE EN PLACE**" as part of your prep.
- ☞ **DON'T WORRY IF YOU MAKE A MISTAKE:** some of the best discoveries happen when you're going wrong; getting around it is half the fun.
- ☞ Once you've got the techniques sorted **EXPERIMENT** with a dish.
- ☞ Expect that **THE SAME DISH WILL TASTE DIFFERENT EVERY TIME** you cook it even if you've followed the recipe to the letter; that's the joy of it.
- ☞ It's probably **BETTER NOT TO TRY SOMETHING FOR THE FIRST TIME** when you've got a load of people around, unless you're learning together.
- ☞ Think about how you can **SAVE ENERGY** (and cash) as you cook: cover pans with lids; boil kettle, and pour into the pan for your green vegetables; cook enough for more than one meal—it costs less to reheat the second one than cook another.
- ☞ If you're cooking for loads of people, **TRY PREPPING AND EVEN COOKING MUCH OF IT AHEAD**, so you can enjoy yourself.
- ☞ Don't forget you can **RECYCLE THINGS**: roast up potato peelings in oil and salt; turn stale bread into bread crumbs; defrosted frozen egg whites are better than standard for whisking/holding air for meringues and soufflés; grate up any dried cheese bits for a sauce; turn excess pasta into a bake, or throw it into a frittata; fry cooked noodles up like a pancake.
- ☞ Don't just throw them into a pan, **ENGAGE WITH YOUR INGREDIENTS** at each stage of the process; smell when something's ready; see how raw or cooked through it is; touch it for doneness; listen to its water simmering or boiling; the oil sizzling or spluttering; it's all telling you something a book can't.
- ☞ **TASTE ...** Have a few teaspoons handy so you can dig in and judge the balance in a dish; it's key to seasoning and building your palate.
- ☞ **KEEP IT BALANCED** on the plate: you are what you eat.
- ☞ **MAKE IT LOOK BEAUTIFUL**, even if it's only a snack.
- ☞ **ENJOY**—you're in it for a lifetime.

MISE EN PLACE

means "everything in its place." It involves getting out all the ingredients needed for your dish/dishes and the equipment and organizing it around your counter; doing all the preliminary work such as slicing, beating, sifting, or whatever and putting all the individual elements into neat containers ready for cooking.



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