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Choose Wisely, Cutlery

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Choose Wisely,

CUTLERY

by Anne Beem

Technical Journalism Junior

CUTTING, paring, slicing, chopping. Most food preparation involves these essential procedures. With this in mind, let’s take an imaginary shopping trip to buy those specially designed pieces of cutlery needed in the kitchen.

We are confronted with a selection of knives ranging from a paring knife to the frozen food cutter. However, for ordinary home use, buying can be limited to the six most-used pieces of cutlery. The 3-inch blade paring knife, 5-inch utility knife and steak knife, 6 or 8-inch French cook’s knife, 7 to 9-inch roast slicer, and the long serrated-edge bread knife are suitable sizes for the home kitchen.

Before buying any one of these, be sure to consider each basic quality of a good knife.

1. The blade should be of high grade vanadium stainless steel or of improved high carbon crucible steel. Carbon steel (referring to its treatment) produces a blade of greater hardness and toughness. “Deep-tempered” is another treatment producing the same effect. This process gives a more flexible knife which maintains a sharp edge longer.

2. “Precision ground” is another important quality to look for in purchasing a knife. This term pertains to the cutting edge of the blade and defines an even sharpness throughout its length. Each type of knife has a different degree of sharpness because of its special use in the kitchen.

3. “Permanent assembly” is essential for construction of a good knife. The wooden handle has a slit in its base to allow for inserting the knife blade. The blade is then riveted permanently with brass knobs.

4. An individual quality of the bread knife is its serrated edge. Most serrated-edged blades are ground to a true concave shape with a keen edge that never dulls and doesn’t require sharpening.

After a knife set is purchased, proper care should be taken to preserve its high quality. Although knife blades are treated to withstand nicks, it is a good policy to wash the sharp-edged knives and lay them out separately to prevent scratching and marring. By the way, the serrated edge on the bread knife is constructed only for soft cutting. If used in any other way, the edge is easily destroyed. A special knife container should be used also to protect the sharp edge.

When you buy, carefully consider all of these points, for a durable high-quality knife set is an item owned with pride by the homemaker.