

Cookware Questionnaire

Use this tool to help you figure out the cookware you want to buy.

What Is Your Budget?

The first thing to do when shopping for anything is to figure out your budget. You don't have to spend a fortune to get good cookware, but you should be willing to invest a little bit.

Keep in mind that if you buy good quality cookware, your cost-per-year-of-use is going to be lower than if you buy cheap cookware that you have to replace every few years. So it's worth it to spend more and get a brand that will last a lifetime.

If you're buying clad stainless cookware, budget is more of an issue than if you're just looking for a nonstick or cast iron skillet, both of which are very affordable. We recommend spending at least \$200 for a 5-10 piece set of clad stainless, or about \$20-40 per piece; anything less is almost certainly going to be of questionable quality. If you have a big budget, you have less figuring to do here, which is great. But if you want a good set and are on a tight budget, we recommend you save your money until you can afford the set you really want rather than settle for something you don't truly love. You will be happier in the long run.

My budget for cookware is _____.

What Type of Stove Do You Have?

This matters most if you have an induction stove or cooktop, as only magnetic cookware will work with it. This means cast iron (including enameled cast iron) and carbon steel for sure, and most clad stainless, including that with a copper core (like [All-Clad Copper Core](#)).

If you have a gas or conventional electric cooktop, you can use whatever cookware you want. However, you may want to go with induction-ready cookware anyway, just in case there's an induction cooktop in your future (portables can be handy to have).

The best cookware for my type of stove is _____.

How Much Cookware Do You Need?

This is a tricky question. You have to consider what you already own as well as the pieces you need *and* the pieces you want. (There's a difference.)

We suggest you start with a full list of everything you want, and weed out unnecessary pieces as your budget dictates.

Also, think long and hard about your "want" pieces. For example, you may think you'll get a ton of use out of a pasta pentola, but you may find it's easier to just use your 3 quart sauce pan to boil pasta, and an affordable colander to drain it.

On the other hand, don't forget about useful pieces that will give you your money's worth: a [steamer insert](#), for example, is an incredibly useful piece you won't regret buying.

This is a tricky category to qualify because everyone's needs are different, but these questions may help you figure out what you really need:

I usually cook for _____ people. Sometimes I cook for _____ people.

I already own: _____.

I need to get: _____.

I need 1) A few basic pieces; 2) Some specialty pieces; 3) Everything; 4) A small basic set; 5) A large set; 6) Other: _____.

What Kind of Cookware Do You Want?

See the article for a discussion about different types of cookware (e.g., stainless, nonstick, cast iron, copper, etc.). It will help you figure out which is best for you. Note

that you will probably want more than one type: a set of clad stainless for basic tasks, an enameled cast iron Dutch oven for braising, a cast iron skillet for high heat searing, and maybe a nonstick skillet for eggs (although the cast iron will also work).

My main kind of cookware should be: _____.

Other pieces I want are: _____.

What Size Cookware Pieces Do You Need?

It is almost impossible to get all the sizes you need in one set, so you'll probably have to buy an open stock piece or two to round out your collection.

The ideal sized sauce pan for me is _____.

The ideal sized second sauce pan for me is _____.

The ideal sized skillet for me is _____.

The ideal sized second skillet or sauté pan for me is _____.

NOTE: We recommend a 3qt and a 1.5-2qt sauce pan, a 10" and 12" skillet, or a 4-5 qt sauté pan. Dutch ovens are best in the 5-7qt range and stock pots are best at 6-8qt.

What Is Your Cooking Style?

Does your cooking style really influence the cookware you buy? Maybe and maybe not, depending on what your cooking style is. Answering the following questions may help you zero in on which cookware is best for your style and your kitchen.

Choose one:

- 1) I want my kitchen time as fast and easy as possible;
- 2) I am a serious cook and I love being in the kitchen.

Choose one:

- 1) I want my cookware to match as much as possible;
- 2) I want the best piece of cookware for each job.

Choose one:

- 1) Good equipment is a joy to use and improves my kitchen time;
- 2) I just want to spend the minimum I can and still get decent quality cookware.

Now that you have a good idea of your budget and what you're looking for, the buying guide will help you find your perfect cookware.