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Prompt: Tell us about a favorite kitchen appliance or technique.

Wok This Way – Alf DiRosa

I bought my 14-inch round bottom carbon steel Mandarin-style wok in May 2023 and my culinary life has never been the same. My reason for getting it was simple: I wanted a better veggie lo mein than I was finding at most take out places, and learning to cook in a wok seemed like the way to go. I thought that I was merely buying a round pan for cooking noodles, but what I actually got was an exciting and unforgiving teacher that would only reward me with great results when I learned how to organize my preparation, cut ingredients correctly, and gauge cooking times accurately.

I also got a workout! I was shocked how heavy it was on its own (over 4.5 lbs), and flipping a wok full of food is easily the most

physically demanding cooking I've ever done (use two hands when you can, your wrists will thank you), but I get few culinary kicks more satisfying than a well-timed wok toss. Its thin walls also makes it get very hot very quickly, so mise en place has been a must when it comes

to my wok cooking. The high heat also makes it easy to overcook ingredients if you don't move quickly, but if you time things correctly, your reward will be stir-fries with 'bite' that retain the distinct flavors of each component (keeping a sizzle going is key).



Noodle dishes are what got me into the world of wok cooking, and I still rarely find takeout noodle dishes that I prefer over those from my wok. Beyond noodle dishes, my wok has done so much more to broaden my home cooking horizons. I have used it to deep fry laminate pastries, pop popcorn, steam and braise veggies, and cook the fastest and tastiest egg dishes I've ever made. The wok forced me to improve my knife skills overall, taught me to judge overcooking vs undercooking by sight and sound, and made my whole approach to cooking more thoughtful and efficient. Yes, it sounds more like a strict teacher than a mere cooking vessel, but it's a teacher that's kept me well-fed while avoiding buying take out noodles for three years now, so I'm happy to remain its humble student.

NutriBullet – Isabel Hulkower

It turns out the device I can't live without is a NutriBullet- and it's not because I'm a gym bro making protein shakes or an almond mom making her morning smoothie. In fact I don't think I've ever made a drink in that little blender.

What it's actually best for is salad dressings, pestos, and marinades. Making quick homemade condiments has completely elevated my cooking and streamlined the process so well it's almost an afterthought. I also have a very impressive robot coupe food processor that I adore and could write a second article about- It's big and powerful but extremely heavy and has lots of annoying parts to clean. Since using it is such a production I end

up reaching for the sleek little nutribullet much more often, and enjoying its tiny efficiency for making small batches of saucy things. Truly nothing beats a beautiful emulsified vinaigrette without needing to dice garlic!

My favorite use- and the greatest hack for using all the beautiful fresh herbs I'm bringing home- is "messy pesto." Rough chop whatever you've got (my favorite combo is sorrel, parsley, and mint but anything will do (though it is possible to overdo it with the dill or tarragon so be forewarned)) throw in garlic, a handful of nuts, and a splash of olive oil and lemon juice and this blender will turn it into the most ecstatic green fragrant sauce you've ever had the privilege of throwing together.

Happy blending!!!



Pressure Cooker – Nathan Vanover

I believe the most useful item in my kitchen has to be my electric pressure cooker which is an Instantpot copy item from Best Buy. It has a wide variety of uses, helps me save time when cooking or prepping,

and it is so simple and the dishes come out better than I ever expect. It is very good at cooking meat and soups from frozen if I forget to defrost or if I am looking for an easy dinner night. It also is an easy way to use less dishes when I prepare food that may normally take a number of separate pots, pans, and bowls. It has a mode to sauté, which I can then follow into pressure cooking for dishes like soups or curries when needed. With the ability to customize cooking times and modes I can dial in just the parameters needed for delicious and tender food. It cooks meats thoroughly while keeping them hydrated, and potatoes and rice are also always perfect and seem to absorb the flavors well because of the pressure and high heat. I also love to use this device when bulk preparing food for our cats. We can easily put multiple pounds of a protein like chicken with a little water and cook it to our cat's liking. It helps keep the food from being overcooked or left in a state that is hard to manage for their little tummies. We are able to easily shred it by hand or in a countertop stand mixer that cuts down on the prep time by a lot. Just add desired water and their food nutrient additive and we can pre-portion straight out of the pot for thoughtless and easy meals. Above all, the pressure cooker is very easy to clean. It has a few detachable parts that are dishwasher safe and is easy to wipe down any area that did get dirty in the process. I recommend a pressure cooker in every person's kitchen, and electric versions seem to be a little more safe and cost effective than using the stove top variant.

6 Contradictory Rules for Better Cooking – Paul Huddleston

Rule 1A: Listen to the pros

A good cookbook with thoughtful, qualitative instruction is worth every cent the book costs. You ought to research the book, though, if even for ten minutes. I find it best to avoid certain new-age celebrity chefs who indulge themselves in experimental gastronomy. I'll take my food not in the form of bubbles, thank you.

Rule 1B: Recipes are more like loose guidelines, anyway

Confidence in the kitchen starts with many mediocre dishes. Add extra spices, vegetables and bits to recipes to learn what a dish wants and needs. Occasionally, ditch the recipe altogether. Compost bin is there if you need it.

Rule 2A: Wallow in extravagance

Make a feast every now and again. Starters, entrees, sides, and even a dessert. Spend the whole week planning it. Creating a full meal is such an accomplishment. Start with a crowd who is slow to judge and don't mind eating dinner at 9pm. Operational word there is and.

Playing the Mandolin – Ciara Prencipe

I recently got a mandolin slicer and I can't stop talking about it. It has changed my relationship to salads, which used to feel like a chore and now feels like a joy. Why does slicing a vegetable super thin make it taste better? Science may never know! Using the mandolin is so much faster than chopping the same vegetables by hand. Suddenly my slaws and salads are fast and easy to make, and feel luxurious and special to eat.

Despite how I feel about it, there is one big downside. Every time I mention my mandolin to someone they always say some variation on "be careful not to slice your fingers!" The mandolin can hurt you, yes, but it's not a foregone conclusion that using one will result in injury. So I'm sharing my guidelines for safe and happy mandolin use to counter the widespread fear and avoidance.

- Respect the mandolin. It has a very sharp blade and can, of

Rule 2B: Just eat

Food is greater than the sum of its parts. Sharing a meal with people in your life or even just feeding yourself is worth more than the nutrients. Grilled chicken without seasoning and the most vapid salad you can muster is still a worthwhile meal. Might as well add salt, though.

Rule 3A: Quick and clean

Clean as you go. Sounds like a silly rule for cooking but being burnt out after a summer season of CSA is a real thing. It makes cooking feel less like an all-night, every-day chore. Enlist your children, if you must.

Rule 3B: Cilantro on the ceiling

I made a mexican meal a few years ago for friends and upon walking into the kitchen, one of them asked "why is there cilantro on the ceiling?" I found the question to be insulting and immaterial. Sometimes cooking demands flour on the nose, tomato on the shirt or cilantro on the ceiling. One note; if you have the rule in your house that those who cook do not clean, you must be flexible with that rule when cooking this way.

Cook with gusto, friends, and damn the rules.



course, hurt you. Important to remember, but do not let it stop you from slicing!

- Do not push. Slicing with the mandolin should be easeful, and if it's not, something is off. Change your settings, how you're holding the vegetable, or change the tool. A peeler, grater or knife can be a better choice.
- The mandolin requires

mindfulness. Do not mandolin in a rush, while you're angry, hangry, scared or distracted. Do not text and mandolin. Multitasking is to be done cautiously if at all – you can listen to music but not watch tv.

- Cultivate an abundance mindset. Do not be scared to "waste" the end of a vegetable. Do not slice down past an inch or so of the vegetable – that's the danger zone. If you're trying to use every scrap, get cut-proof gloves or have a knife handy to finish the job. Or eat the end of the cucumber as a treat for the chef!
- Wash immediately after use. The longer you leave it, the more scrubbing is required. Rinse immediately and it's safer and looks enticing in your dishwasher rack, ready for another round of fast and easy high quality slicing.

Wishing you happy and safe mandolin use!

Silicone Spatula – Lani Furbank

I've been away from PVF for seven months since having a baby this spring, and I'm itching to get back — not just for the invigorating work and the wonderful community of farm team members, but for the unmatched access to culinary delights. Having worked as a food writer, I considered myself quite the gourmand before joining PVF, but I was surprised by how much working at the farm upped my kitchen game. I was constantly bringing home armfuls of seconds (tomatoes, squash, radishes, you name it!) to put to use, and being challenged by new-to-me ingredients (hello, Fava beans and turmeric root!). I cooked more my first season than I had for several years prior, and ate better to boot!

When it comes to kitchen style and equipment, I ascribe to opposite philosophies: for recipes, I rarely make the same thing twice, but for kitchen gadgets, I rely on just a handful of simple items every day. When I'm planning our menus for the week,

my first stop (as anyone who's talked to me about recipes will tell you, perhaps with an eye roll) is the New York Times Cooking app, where you can find endless inspiration from every corner of the globe. Most of the recipes are straightforward and home cook-friendly, and many are on the table in under an hour! I love searching for whatever ingredient we have a bounty of that week (greens? cucumbers? eggplant?) and choosing a combination that intrigues me. When it comes to PVF veggies, you don't need a lot of fancy footwork to make a wow-worthy meal, but I love using the whole plant — like roasted turnips in a citrus-gochujang glaze and the greens sautéed with garlic and soy, paired with some fluffy rice and crispy tofu.

I'm also a big fan of putting up our most abundant crops, but in fuss-free methods: whether that's freezing (rather than canning) whole tomatoes for future sauces, curries, or chilis; roasting, mashing, and freezing portioned jars of winter squash for future cookies, pies, or soups; or lacto-

fermenting daikon radishes in salt and water for a delightfully crunchy and funky snack or topping. I do have and use lots of fun kitchen gadgets, like a mandolin slicer and dehydrator, but I often am too lazy to get them out of the cupboard, instead relying on a trusty Japanese chef's knife, a worn but sturdy wooden cutting board, a heavy orange Dutch oven, a microplane, and a flexible silicone spatula — which is perhaps my most favorite tool of all. Often when I'm making a dish for the farm pot luck (dessert is my go-to), it starts in the stand mixer, one of few appliances that gets pride-of-place on the counter because of how often it's used!

But really, the best technique in the kitchen is good soil and careful harvesting at the farm, and I can't wait until my fridge is full of PVF veggies again soon! For now, there's a jar of last season's butterkin squash purée in my freezer, which, along with the produce we grow in our raised beds at home, will be one of my daughter's first foods in just a few months.



Trusty Metal Pan – Lova Andersson

This past fall, my friend asked me if I wanted some of her sourdough starter. As someone who has never even gotten yeast to work with me and make good bread I was hesitant, but I had a long winter ahead of me and thought why not. And so my sourdough journey began. All of the articles and videos online will tell you that you absolutely NEED a dutch oven. I refuse to acquire a new item just for a hobby I've picked up that I fear will fail dramatically. Anyways, I figured the only thing I needed to do to make sourdough bread and avoid a dutch oven was to create my own source of steam. I found a deep metal pan that wasn't being used, and preheated the oven with it inside. Poured some water in it and set my dough inside and hoped for the best. And it worked amazingly! Now I make a loaf or so a week and I have not even thought about getting a dutch oven. Don't know what I would do without my trusty pan. The best part is that I don't have to remember to take the lid off the dutch oven halfway through the bake... I would forget.