



Blenders are a now must-have for many home cooks.

# Simple kitchen tools part of a recipe for success

## Gadgets don't guarantee tasty meals



VICKY SANDERSON  
AROUND THE  
HOUSE

**C**hef Antonio Park knows that in the quest for culinary perfection, professional kitchens need specialized tools.

Understandable, given that he's trained under demanding masters in Japan, judged on *Chopped Canada*, created successful restaurants in Montreal, and recently collaborated with Drake on the upscale sports-bar Pick Six ([www.pick6ixto.com](http://www.pick6ixto.com)).

When it comes to home cooking, though, Park insists great meals can be produced using just the basics.

"At home, simple is best. I'm not doing sous-vide there. You don't need a ton of special stuff to make things that are really flavourful and delicious," says Park. ([www.antonipark.com](http://www.antonipark.com))

Park first learned to favour fresh taste over trendy tools from his mother, who made everything — including milled spices, miso, and soya sauce — from scratch. It must have helped that the kitchen was supplied by a 47,000 square-foot garden of pomegranates, yucca, mandarins, zucchinis, grapes, watermelons, eggplants, and pumpkins.

"At home, I like things that have multiple purposes. Like, I serve the salad in the same stainless-steel bowl I mixed it

in. It's organic, it's straightforward, it works."

Similarly, he's a fan of cast iron pans. Not only do they increase the iron in foods, he says, they develop a non-stick surface that retains heat well, making them useful as serving dishes.

He concedes that they're heavy, but dismisses the notion that care is overly complicated. "Hand wash them, for sure, but the main thing is to dry them properly, and they last forever," says Park.

For cast iron that itself approaches art, take a look at cookware from Borough Furnace ([www.boroughfurnace.com](http://www.boroughfurnace.com)), a metal casting workshop in Owego, NY that uses traditional casting updated to make it more environmentally friendly.

In Canada, there's Bristow Iron Works ([www.bristowironworks.ca](http://www.bristowironworks.ca)), which sells its hand-made cast iron kitchen and fireplace utensils around the globe.

Pieces are made from historical moulds the owners search out at antique stores and flea markets. They do make a classic frying pan, but at 19 inches across and 36 pounds, it's not for the faint of heart — or the weak of arm.

Vijaya Selvaraju ([www.vijayaselvaraju.com](http://www.vijayaselvaraju.com)), a self-taught food expert on the Marilyn Denis Show with followings on YouTube ([www.youtube.com/user/vijaya16](http://www.youtube.com/user/vijaya16)) and TasteMade ([www.tastemade.com/tastemakers/](http://www.tastemade.com/tastemakers/)

[vijaya-selvaraju](http://www.vijayaselvaraju.com)) agrees that the best tools do more than one thing.

"Kitschy items may be fun to try but if I already have a tool that will serve the purpose, I'm not willing to give up precious counter or cupboard space," she says.

As an example, Selvaraju points to a tiny tool that clips herbs off their stems. "I can do that with a colander — you just pull the leaves through the little holes and they are caught in the base."

Her go-to countertop appliance is a blender, which she says she'd "always choose to give space to over a food processor because nothing beats a heavy-duty blender. You can use it for so many things — frozen mango, or ice cream, or chopping veggies in a pinch."



Properly cared for, cast iron cookware (this from Borough Furnace) lasts forever.



Vijaya Selvaraju is a self-taught food expert with a huge following on YouTube.

Homeowners seem to concur: in the U.S., more than 90 per cent of homes have at least one blender, according to research by the Association of Home Appliance Manufacturers ([www.aham.org](http://www.aham.org)).

Knives are foundational in any kitchen, says Selvaraju. "I do have a bit of an arsenal, with a chef's knife, a pairing knife, a serrated knife — the usual stuff. None of it's that special, but I do keep them sharp," she says.

Rather than fussing with a stone, she recommends an electric knife sharpener, readily available for well under \$100 at such retailers as Canadian Tire and Walmart. Chef'sChoice ([www.chef-schoice.com](http://www.chef-schoice.com)) seems to be a popular brand.

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Antonio Park thinks home cooking should focus on flavour, not fuss.