

Fitzgerald Kitchens

TOP 15 KITCHEN ACCESSORIES FOR BEGINNERS



INTRODUCTION

Setting up house is a very exciting step toward independence, but knowing which kitchen gadgets to buy can be quite overwhelming.

Use this guide to plan your new kitchen's purchases and remember that you don't have to get everything at once. Buying one item every couple of months will be kind to your budget and before you know it, your new kitchen will run like a machine.

We've even put a handy planning guide in the back to help you source the best item for your budget.

TIP:

To help you prioritize your kitchen purchases, list the items according to must-haves (things that you will use at least 4 times a week) and nice-to-haves (things that you will use once or twice a month only)



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1. KITCHEN SCALES

Whether you bake, cook or are on a weight-controlled eating plan, many recipes require the use of kitchen scales.

Balanced

The original option, these scales use weights on the one side to balance the ingredients on the other. While they are still functional, their accuracy is not as good as newer versions.



Mechanical

Also known as spring scales, these rely on the weight of the ingredients to push down on a spring connected to a gauge that indicates the weight. They come in 2 versions: hanging or platform scales.



Electronic

The most popular version, and also the most accurate. It makes use of LCD display and delicate sensors to measure ingredients up to the gram.



2. COOKING THERMOMETER

Essential for the perfect roast, there are many different thermometers available:

- 1) Dial thermometer
- 2) Digital Thermometer
- 3) Instant-read thermometer
- 4) Thermometer fork
- 5) Thermocouple Unit
- 6) Oven probe with cord

For general cooking, a dial thermometer will be sufficient. Insert it into the thickest part of the meat, away from the bone, for the most accurate reading. Or just drop it into stocks and stews!

A digital thermometer is a great investment as it tends to be more accurate, and an instant-read thermometer will give you a quick and efficient reading in less than 10 seconds.

A thermometer fork is great for outdoor use, and a thermocouple unit will give a very accurate reading by measuring in 2 places and calculating the average.

An oven probe with cord can be left in the oven while cooking, so that you won't have to open the oven to see the temperature.



3. SALAD SPINNER

Soggy salad is never a good thing on a dinner plate. Spin dry your leaves and get crispy salad every time.

- 1) Look for a salad spinner that has a non-slip base and a comfortable handle.
- 2) Ensure that the volume is sufficient for the size of salads that you tend to make.
- 3) Look for one that is easy to use as well as easy to clean – getting small leaves out of ridges in the lid can be taxing!

TIP: Don't underestimate the functionality of this clever gadget. A salad spinner can also be used to:

- 1) Store salad in the fridge so it won't wilt.
- 2) Wash and dry veggies and fruit.
- 3) Drain pasta after cooking.



4. SPIRAL SLICER

This very clever gadget turns veggies into spirals for salads, stir-fries or carb-free noodle dishes.

It can slice anything from carrots and cucumber to zucchini and radishes.

Popular blade options are:

- 1) Linguini – wide and flat strips
- 2) Spaghetti – thin and flat strips
- 3) Julienne – thick, square strips

Choose a model that is right for your skill level and dietary requirements. And be careful; the blades on these slicers are incredibly sharp!

TIP:

To care for stainless steel kitchen accessories, wash them in soapy water and dry them thoroughly before storing.



5. KNIFE SET

With these 3 kitchen knives, you'd be able to prepare any meal. Ensure that they are made of high carbon steel or stainless steel and that you wash, store and sharpen them according to the manufacturer's care instructions.

Well-balanced Chef's Knife

Used for preparing food, including meat cuts, it is a large, general-purpose kitchen knife usually 20 - 25cm long. The blade curves upwards along its length and it ends in a narrow point.



Serrated Bread Knife

Designed to cut soft bread without crushing it, it has a sharp edge with saw-like notches or teeth, which is referred to as a serrated edge. The knife is usually 20-25cm long.



Paring Knife

A small knife with a short blade (10-18cm) and firm handle, used to cut away thin layers of, or paring, fruit and vegetables. It is also useful in coring and cutting of small ingredients.



6. GRATER

A grater is such a basic kitchen accessory that it's almost impossible to imagine not having one. Here are the most popular options:

Box or Tower Grater

A 3 or 4-sided grater that offers different grating options on each side. The handle should be sturdy and the base should have non-slip grips to make grating effortless.

Paddle or Washboard Grater

A single surface with a handle on one side and non-slip grips or feet on the other. Because it can be angled to desire, it simplifies the grating of harder ingredients like parmesan.

Ceramic Grater Plate

A small round plate with a coarse surface, this little gadget is perfect for grating garlic and ginger.

Grater Tub

A very simple and practical accessory, the grating surface fits directly onto a container which can be removed and closed to store the grated ingredients.



7. KITCHEN SHEARS

An absolute must-have, they can be used for anything from portioning meat and cutting through bones to cutting harder veggies like artichoke, flower stems and stalks.

- 1) Kitchen shears are designed to have a lot more force on the pivoting point, so they are much stronger than regular scissors.
- 2) Find a shear that can be taken apart to ensure proper cleaning.
- 3) Kitchen shears will also feel slightly heavier than normal scissors because of the weight of the blades.
- 4) You don't have to spend a lot of money – a good mid-range pair will last you many years.

TIP:

To ensure that your shear blades remain sharp, avoid the temptation of using them to cut paper and plastic.



8. HERB SCISSORS

While not necessarily essential, these special scissors are great because they get the job done quickly and efficiently. Most models have up to 5 blades that finely cut the leaves without effort. Make sure that your scissors are dishwasher-safe to simplify cleaning.

- 1) Safely and easily chop herbs for salads, dips and marinades.
- 2) Get that finely chopped green onion for sauces and garnishes.
- 3) Great for cutting leafy veggies for soups and stews.
- 4) Easily remove leaves from harder herbs like rosemary and thyme.



9. COFFEE AND SPICE GRINDER

Once you've used one of these, you'll be reluctant to live without one!

A good grinder has the ability to grind almost anything that is too hard for your knife (or hands!) to handle:

Nuts, coffee beans and seeds can quickly be blitzed to perfection. The longer you grind, the finer it becomes so you have total control over the grade of coarseness of the ingredients.

Choose a grinder that has a removable grinding chamber that can go in the dishwasher. In some units, the chamber is integrated in the design so it makes it very difficult to clean. Spices leave an aroma behind, so unless you clean it properly, you'll end up with allspice-flavoured coffee!

TIP:

To get lodged coffee or spices out of the chamber, grind a few kernels of rice and then wipe it out with kitchen towel.



10. MORTAR & PESTLE

This kitchen staple has been around for millennia and it is still a trusted way to get spices, herbs, oil and salt to form a beautiful marinade or rub.

Hand grinding is more labour intensive, but creates a subtlety of flavour that cannot be replicated. It is also extremely easy to clean and because they are made of stone or other non-porous materials, they are completely hygienic.

Look for a deep mortar that can hold the ingredients without it flying out. Also ensure that it has a heavy base to withstand vigorous pounding. A slightly textured interior will ensure that it is sufficient for both wet and dry ingredients.

The pestle should be long enough to comfortably reach the bottom without bringing your hand in contact with the mortar.



11. SILICONE UTENSILS & COOKWARE

While wooden and metal kitchen utensils have a place, nothing beats silicone when it comes to versatility and hygiene.

- 1) Silicone can safely be used at any temperature, from the freezer to 230° C in the oven, making it perfect for storing food, baking, cooking and boiling.
- 2) Silicone is non-stick so getting any baked goods out of it is a breeze.
- 3) Good quality silicone does not retain any smells or stains.
- 4) Silicone is non-porous and therefore has the inherent ability to withstand bacteria, making one of the most hygienic materials to use in the kitchen.
- 5) It is completely microwave and dishwasher safe.
- 6) Because the material is soft, it is the perfect for utensils used with non-stick pots and pans.

Silicone kitchen accessories include cooking utensils, bowls, jugs and cups for microwave use, bakeware, oven mitts, cutting boards and more.



12. OVEN MITTS

There is nothing worse than quickly grabbing at a dish in the kitchen and burning your hand. No kitchen should be without a proper oven mitt – here's what to look out for:

- 1) Flame retardancy should be your first priority. Thickly woven cotton fabric usually does the trick.
- 2) Double mitts are great for protecting not only your hands, but your body from heated dishes as well.
- 3) Silicone mitts are efficient, easy to clean and durable.
- 4) Silicone also offers effective protection against hot liquids, while cotton mitts won't.
- 5) Fiber mitts or gloves are made from materials like Kevlar®, and while they offer superior protection from heat, they will also not be much help during a hot spill.



13. CUTTING BOARDS

When choosing an appropriate cutting board for your ingredients, there are few things to consider:

- 1) Stone, marble, granite and glass all offer sturdy and hygienic surfaces, but are terrible for knives and shouldn't be used as a cutting surface.
- 2) Bamboo is a more knife-friendly alternative, but the manufacturing process uses a lot of adhesives which can leach into the food. The fibers can also start to fray over time which makes it easy for bacteria to spread.
- 3) *Enviroboard* is non-porous, BPA free, microwave and dishwasher safe and is gentle on your knives. Colour-coded options make it easy to identify which board to use for which type of ingredient.
- 4) Rubber mats are sturdy, dishwasher safe, gentle on knives and completely water resistant and non-porous.
- 5) Good old wood is the most sympathetic to your knives. If cared for properly and if sufficient food safety guidelines are observed, they also offer no hygiene risk, making them a great choice in the kitchen.



14. POTS AND PANS

The most important rule of thumb is: buy the best you can afford because it should last you a lifetime. Here is our list of the essentials.

- 1) 2-3 liter saucepan with lid
- 2) 4-8 liter saucepan with lid
- 3) 25-35cm sauté pan with lid
- 4) 25-35cm heavy skillet or cast iron skillet with lid
- 5) 25cm non-stick pan
- 6) 6-8 liter Dutch Oven

What is a Dutch Oven?

Also called a casserole, it's a heavy, thick walled pot – usually made of seasoned cast iron - that can be used in the oven, on the stove top and even on an open fire. It is great for stews, roasting, browning meat, baking bread and frying.



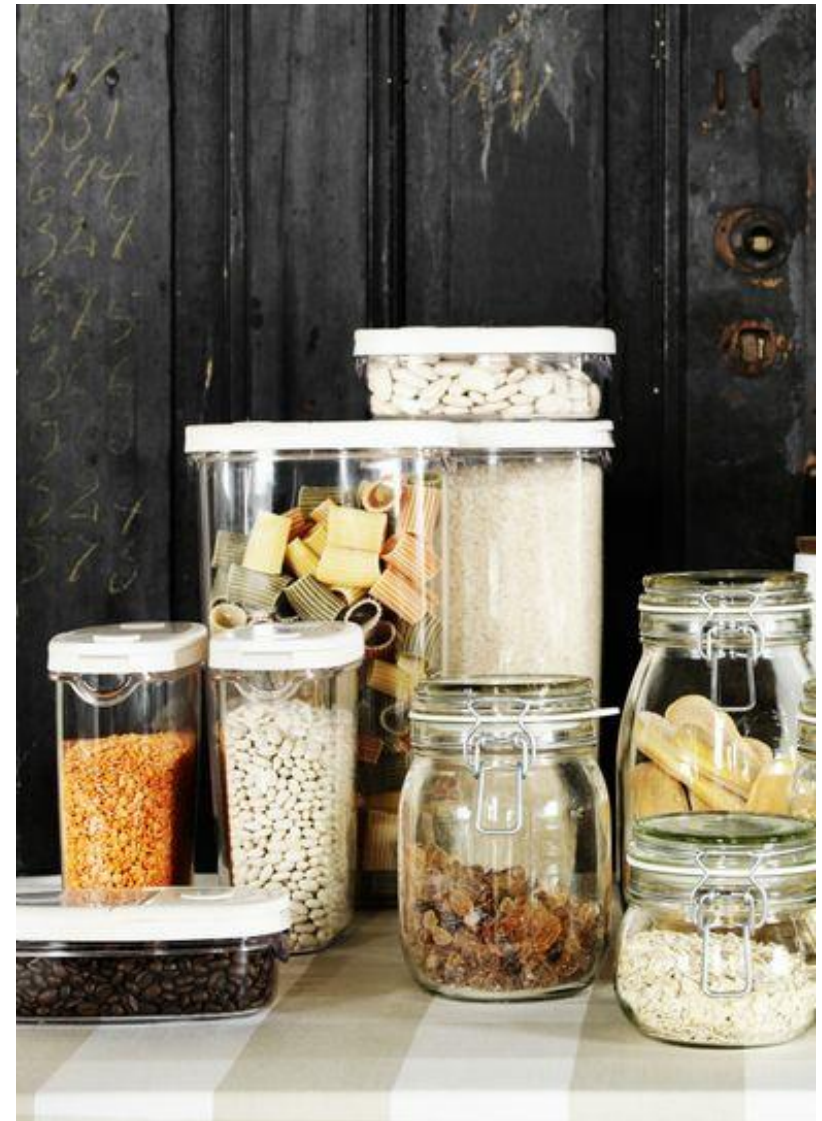
15. PLASTICWARE

Whether it's for saving left-overs, storing dry good or making bulk meals for the freezer, plastic containers come in very handy.

- 1) Look for plastic that is BPA free.
- 2) Buy a set with different sizes, from tiny ones for spices to big ones for meat and vegetables.
- 3) Ensure that the lids lock tightly: air-tight containers help foods stay fresher for longer.
- 4) For ease of use, buy containers that are dishwasher safe.
- 5) Items with right angles (as opposed to round ones) make storage easier, both in the fridge and the cupboard.

TIP:

Never put hot food in the fridge or freezer. Always let it cool down completely first and then store. Some containers have lids with steam outlets that will allow the food to cool safely before refrigerating.



KITCHEN UTENSILS PLANNING GUIDE – [click here to download.](#)



ITEM	TICK APPROPRIATE		PRICE & NOTES		PRICE & NOTES		PRICE & NOTES	
	MUST-HAVE	NICE-TO-HAVE	NAME OF STORE	NOTES	NAME OF STORE	NOTES	NAME OF STORE	NOTES
Kitchen Scales								
Cooking Thermometer								
Salad Spinner								
Spiral Slicer								
Knife Set								
Grater								
Kitchen Shears								
Herb Scissors								
Coffee & Spice Grinder								
Mortar & Pestle								
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Oven Mitts								
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Pots & Pans								
Plasticware								



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