Like most endeavors, the right equipment makes the task easier. This list paves the way. Italicized indicates the ones I own.

**Must haves: tools I believe to be essential**

**Pots and pans**
A heavy bottomed 10-inch skillet, a 12-inch skillet with a lid, an 8-quart pot, a 3- or 4-quart sauce pan and a Dutch oven. A Dutch oven is an investment, but one worth making because it lasts forever and will help you become a better cook because temperature is evenly distributed so food cooks more evenly, less likely to burn. *All-Clad*

**Mixing bowls**
Glass or metal mixing bowls in various sizes. Plastic bowls hold odors, are harder to keep clean and can bend out of shape.

**Knives**
Start with a paring knife, 10-inch chef’s or Santoku knife and a serrated knife. *Forschner, Wusthof*

**Cutting boards**
Wood, bamboo or plastic is less important than keeping them clean. Two cutting boards are even better, especially if they are different colors to help keep raw meat and vegetables separate.

**Measuring spoons**
Accurate and dishwasher safe. I like complete sets of stainless steel spoons on a ring so you don’t have to hunt for the teaspoon measure or discover it melted when it got too close to the dishwasher heating element. *Williams-Sonoma*

**Dry measuring cups**
Used to measure dry ingredients, I have two sets and they include \(\frac{1}{3}\) and \(\frac{2}{3}\), which I love. *Tupperware*

**Liquid Measuring Cups**
I prefer glass so they can also be used in the microwave; they should be clear so you can see the level of food. *Pyrex*

**Sheet pans, heavy gauge**
A workhorse for baking cookies, catching drips, baking pizza. Visit a kitchen supply store.

**Colander**
Use to drain pasta, rinse fruits and vegetables, and sort and rinse lentils and beans. *Tupperware*

**Cheese grater**
Shred carrots and zucchini, slice cucumbers, zest fruit, and even grate cheese. *Microplane box grater*

**Microplane grater**
Great for citrus zest, garlic and for adding a small amount of chocolate shavings to amp up flavors. *Microplane*
Citrus juicer or squeezer
A hand-held juicer for lemons, limes and oranges makes juicing easy and adds fresh flavor to drinks, salad dressings, pasta and salsas.

Food thermometer
The only way to know when food is cooked to a safe temperature. Taylor (instant read), Acurite (jelly/candy), Redi Chek (remote)

Baking dish
9 x 13 baking dish, stainless steel or glass.

Wooden spoons
They don’t transfer heat and won’t scratch the surface of pans plus, they are inexpensive.

Salad spinner
Dry greens last longer and help keep the dressing on the greens. Oxo

Blender
Create smoothies and blend soups and sauces. Braun, no longer available

Toaster/toaster oven
Toaster oven is more versatile but I think the drop toaster toasts bread better. Sunbeam, Black and Decker

Mixer
A handheld is handy to have. Whip egg whites, mash potatoes, cream butter and sugar. I also have a stand mixer that is more than 30 years old; an investment piece that is on the nice-to-have list. KitchenAid

Slow cooker
Soups, stews, lasagna, applesauce. West Bend

Stainless steel wire whisks
Blend vinaigrettes and dressings, aerate flour and beat eggs.

Heat-Resistant spatulas
Use for stirring on the stove, scraping the last bits out of a bowl and frosting a cake. Oxo

Metal tongs
Long and short, plastic tips and a locking mechanism. The length helps keep your arm out of the fire but beware that the plastic can melt. Toss salads and serve vegetables.

Vegetable peeler
A sturdy peeler is safer to use. Oxo

Silicon baking mats
Not just for cookies, but also baked fish, cheese crisps and anything else that might stick. Food literally rinses off these silicon mats. Silpat
Liquid soap at the sink
Encourages cooks and diners to keep hands clean.

Potholders

Nice to have: add to your wish list

Food processor
Whirl bean dip, make pie dough, chop vegetables, shred cheese, slice apples — lots of uses. Cuisinart

Kitchen scales
Helps with accuracy in baking and to determine portion sizes. Salter

Cast iron skillet
Even heat distribution. Great for searing. A must for corn bread and cheese fundido. Lodge

Tube pan
Angel food cake, monkey bread.

Stainless steel scoops
For cookies, filling muffin tins, drop biscuits and scooping ice cream — you can even use them to measure sugar.

Kitchen triple timer
Three timers helps you multi task with what’s in the oven, cooking pasta, the sprinkler — you name it. Williams-Sonoma

“Cheater” eyeglasses
See labels, ingredients, recipes and iPad.

Apple divider
Encourages fruit consumption.

Kitchen shears
To trim skin off chicken, cut up fresh herbs, open packages. Joyce Chen

Pressure cooker
Makes meal time fast, easy and more energy efficient. I suggest a 6- to 8-quart stainless steel pressure cooker. Presto

Immersion blenders
Hand-held blenders are great for soups or large batches of cocoa. Braun

Ten-inch dinner plates
Reducing your plate size from 12-inch to 10-inch results in a 22% less food being served. A no-brainer way to control portion sizes.

Tall, narrow glasses (versus short, wide glasses)
People pour 20-30% more into short, wide glasses, but they believe they’ve done the opposite.

I have received no compensation for using a particular brand.