

The Starter Kitchen Checklist

31 essentials, honestly ranked — buy these first, skip the rest.

HOW TO USE THIS

Tick what you already own. Buy Tier 1 before anything else. Everything marked "skip for now" can wait until you actually feel the gap — that's how you avoid clutter.

Tier 1 — Buy These First (the true essentials)

- ☐ Chef's knife (8")
One good knife beats a 15-piece block set. Every time.
- ☐ Cutting board (large, wood or BPA-free)
- ☐ Stainless steel skillet (10–12")
Skip non-stick as your first pan — stainless lasts decades.
- ☐ Saucepan with lid (2–3 qt)
- ☐ Sheet pan (half-size, heavy gauge)
Roasting, baking, reheating — the workhorse.
- ☐ Mixing bowls (nesting set of 3)
- ☐ Measuring cups + spoons
- ☐ Instant-read thermometer
The cheapest upgrade to your cooking, full stop.
- ☐ Wooden spoon + silicone spatula
- ☐ Colander

Tier 2 — Add Within 3 Months

- ☐ Dutch oven (5–6 qt)
Soups, bread, braises. Enameled cast iron if budget allows.
- ☐ Air fryer (4–6 qt basket)
See our tested picks at [buyerguidelab.com](https://www.buyerguidelab.com) — most people overspend here.
- ☐ Box grater
- ☐ Y-peeler
- ☐ Tongs (12", silicone tip)

Tier 2 — Continued

- ☐ Whisk (balloon, stainless)
- ☐ Can opener
- ☐ Kitchen shears
- ☐ Glass food storage set
Skip plastic — glass survives the microwave and doesn't stain.
- ☐ Salad spinner

Tier 3 — Nice to Have (only when you feel the gap)

- ☐ Stand or hand mixer
Only if you bake weekly. Otherwise a whisk and patience.
- ☐ Immersion blender
- ☐ Rice cooker
- ☐ Food processor (small)
- ☐ Cast iron skillet (10")
- ☐ Slow cooker / multi-cooker

Honestly? Skip These For Now

- Knife block sets (you'll use 2 of the 15 knives)
- Single-use gadgets: avocado slicers, egg cookers, banana keepers
- Copper cookware (pretty, high-maintenance, overpriced for beginners)
- Oversized appliances before you know your cooking habits

Want the tested picks for every item above?

We buy, test, and give real verdicts — no sponsored fluff. Start with our

[buyerguidelab.com](https://www.buyerguidelab.com) — The Honest Friend Who Tested It.