

5 Must-Haves For Your Shared Kitchen Recommended by Nutritionists

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One of the most exciting things about moving to a new city or neighborhood are the restaurants you get to add to your must-try list. (Chances are there are a handful of mouthwatering places on your block alone.) But as much those dollar slices and falafels are calling your name, your wallet and waistline will take a major hit if you aren't equipped to prepare some of your meals at home. So, where do you start? While we'd all love to go on a massive shopping spree through William Sonoma, the moving process doesn't leave much wiggle room in the budget for kitchen gadgets. So we checked in with the pros to see what they put on their list of must-haves when stocking a new kitchen. These essentials can mean the difference between an ever-growing takeout bill (and pant size) and delicious, homemade meals in minutes. Here are the first five things nutritionists buy when stocking a new shared kitchen, with our top picks for the splurge vs. steal. Grab a pot, some groceries and your roommate — it's time to cook.

1. Toaster Oven

So basic, and yet so useful, the toaster oven will become your new best friend on nights when your roommate decides to finally give that fancy 20-step Pinterest recipe a try (hogging all the pots and pans), or on days you get tied up at the office and just want to whip up an easy meal.

"The kitchen gadgets that really count are those that get to take up the precious real estate on the countertops," says Bonnie Taub-Dix, RD, and author of the blog, Better Than Dieting. "My first choice is a toaster oven. Unlike a toaster, with a toaster oven you can heat up items you might otherwise need to put in an oven (like a slice of pizza) or dinners in metal containers that you aren't able to put in the microwave, and cook items to a delicious crispness (like roasted potatoes). You can make a quick meal for one by baking a chicken cutlet in the toaster oven — just place on a tray and add some seasoning, a drizzle of balsamic glaze and a drop of olive oil. Add to a salad and you'll have a great, low calorie lunch or dinner."

Splurge: Cuisinart TOB-40 Custom Classic Toaster Oven Broiler, \$79.95

Steal: Black & Decker Black Toaster Oven, \$29.99

2. Food Processor

Not only does it store easily in a small cabinet, but this handy gadget will majorly cut down on meal prep time (which often sends us running to our Seamless app), as you can chop and mince ingredients in minutes. Plus, think of all the smoothies you'll be making!

"A must-have pick for my first kitchen was a small, countertop food processor — not a huge, expensive KitchenAid, but a tiny one that's perfect for a super small apartment or studio," says Erin Palinski-Wade, RD, author of Belly Fat Diet for Dummies. "In fact, I still use my tiny processor all the time in my current kitchen, which is larger than my first." "Having a food processor of any size is a must if you plan to make vegetables a regular part of your meal plan, which of course we all should!" adds Palinski-Wade. "If you're very short on space, it can even sub as a small blender (you can make

smoothies in it!) and it's great for making servings for one, so if you live on your own you don't feel like you're going to have large amounts of food waste."

Splurge: Cuisinart DFP14BCN Food Processor, 14 Cup, \$289.99

Steal: Cuisinart Mini-Prep Plus Food Processor, 3-Cup, \$39.95

3. Dutch Oven

A dutch oven is the perfect addition to a co-living household and those awesome potluck dinners you're dying to have. Choose a vibrant color, so that when you host friends for a dinner to warm your new home, you can bring it right to the table to serve guests, saving you a dirty dish.

"One of my first, and most essential purchases, was my big 7-quart Dutch oven. It's still a fixture in my kitchen, some 8 years later," says Johannah Sakimura, RD. "As a graduate student, I used it to make all sorts of one-pot meals to get me through the week, like soups, stews, hearty pasta sauces, and curried chicken. It also doubles as a kitchen decor piece if you leave it out on the stove — I didn't have enough cupboard space in my tiny studio to hide it away, anyway!"

Splurge: Le Creuset Cast Iron 3.5-Qt. Wide Oval Dutch Oven, \$179.98

Steal: Threshold Cast Iron Dutch Oven – 3 Qt., \$29.99

4. Blender

No kitchen is complete without a blender, and it's the first item that **Franci Cohen, certified nutritionist and personal trainer**, stocks in a new kitchen. The appliance won't take up precious real estate, and is essential to whipping up smoothies — a super easy way to up your fruit and veggie intake. Plus, if you're one of those people who play whack-a-mole with their alarm clock every morning, your blender will ensure you have a filling and tasty breakfast to grab on the go – even when you have literally one minute to spare.

"The night before, toss some Greek yogurt, skim milk, kale or spinach, banana, berries and almond butter in the blender bowl, cover and place in your fridge," advises Taub-Dix. "In the morning, whip up your smoothie for a powerhouse breakfast loaded with vitamins, minerals, protein and calcium to keep you from visiting the vending machine before lunch."

And while smoothies may be the first thing that come to mind when reaching for the blender, that's only scratching the surface:

"Use it to make vegetable juices, soups, salad dressing and marinades for lean meat — even cocktails!" says Franci Cohen, RD. "You can also use it to create healthy white flour alternatives from healthy grains such as oats."

Splurge: Ninja Professional Blender, \$149.99

Steal: Hamilton Beach Power Elite Multi-Function Blender, \$26.85

5. Chef's Knife

You won't get very far prepping a healthy meal without a good knife, which Sakimura counts as one of her most essential early purchases. If you go for the splurge and invest in a high-quality knife, Sakimura recommends getting it professionally sharpened once a year.

"I bought an 8" chef's knife, which is a great all-purpose knife," she says. "I went with the Wusthof Classic Ikon because I loved the weight and clean design. Talk about a good investment! I still use it almost daily, eight years later, and it has held up beautifully, despite slicing more than its fair share of produce, including countless watermelons and butternut squashes (I'm a nutritionist after all!) I'm sure I should have it done more frequently, but it seems to hold up fine!"

Splurge: Wüsthof Classic Ikon Chef's Knives, \$139.99-\$199.95

Steal: Wüsthof Pro Chef's Knife, 8", \$24.95