

hand, leaving the other hand free for eating. For the grill, choose a good quality turner, tongs, basting brush and grill cleaning brush. While many stores offer sets of barbecue tools, you can usually get better quality tools by choosing them individually (and you don't wind up with tools you won't use). A grill basket is ideal for grilling our wonderful Wild Georgia shrimp and local veggies. A grill mitt is also a nice extra for the King of the Grill.

With our close proximity to the beach and multitude of state and county parks nearby, consider a well-stocked picnic basket. Be sure to choose acrylic plates and glasses to avoid breakage and for easy clean-up.

**Bamboo.** With the growing emphasis on "green," bamboo is a hot item in kitchens right now. The bamboo plant is a sustainable and renewable resource that naturally replenishes itself by constantly sending up new shoots from its root system, so there's no need for replanting. Bamboo utensils resist staining, cracking and warping. They are dishwasher safe and won't dry out, turn gray and splinter like typical wooden spoons. They can be used with both stainless and non-stick cookware without scratching. Bamboo is also used to make beautiful serving pieces, such as bowls, cheese boards, carving boards and platters.

**Kitchenware.** Include microwave cookware in your choices – a small saucepan for cooking frozen vegetables, a large (2- to 4-qt.) pot for cooking rice or soups, and a bar pan or platter for cooking bacon and other meats. Microwave-approved plastic containers or Pyrex and ceramics are all good choices. Pyrex and ceramics also do double duty in the oven.



A spoon rest is a stove-top necessity, as is a good can opener. A smooth-edge can opener which cuts from the side will prevent nicks from sharp tops. A salad spinner makes preparing salads a breeze, and at least one on the market includes a smaller basket for herbs and berries. When choosing measuring spoons and cups, choose ones with the least number of pieces – rather than separate cups for ¼ cup, ½ cup, etc., look for an adjustable measuring cup to cover the range from ¼ cup to 1 cup. Ditto measuring spoons – the six or eight spoons your mother had on a ring have been replaced by one or two adjustable spoons.

A good set of mixing bowls is essential, preferably with lids for storage. A set of small prep bowls allows you to assemble ingredients prior to cooking to make assembly quick and easy. A microplane grater produces fine zest or chocolate or nuts, while a rotary grater provides a coarser grate for soft cheeses, nuts, carrots and such. Many mandolines also have a grating attachment.

The silicone scrapers recommended earlier for use with your cookware are also ideal for mixing and allow you to completely scrape down the sides of mixing bowls. Whisks are used to whip air into cream and egg whites as well as making smooth mixtures. Silicone-coated whisks are available

for making sauces and gravies in your cookware. A garlic press allows you to add the flavor and health benefits of fresh garlic. Salt and pepper grinders also allow you to add fresh flavors to your cooking.

**Knives.** As with cookware, don't skimp on quality. A good set of quality knives can last you a lifetime. At a minimum, choose a paring knife, a utility knife and a chef's knife. A good bread knife will prevent crushing your fresh baked bread. A specialized tomato knife produces clean slices without crushing the tomato. Santoku is the current buzzword in knives and describes a large knife similar to a chef's knife designed with indentions in the blade to allow for easy release when slicing, dicing and chopping. Kitchen shears are used to trim meats and vegetables and perform a variety of cutting jobs in the kitchen. A good vegetable peeler will take just the peeling and leave plenty of potato and carrot to enjoy.

Complementing your knife collection should be a collection of cutting boards. High-density polypropylene is the best choice because it will not dull knives like glass and acrylic and it is easily cleaned and sanitized. It is best to have several cutting boards so that you don't have to stop to wash them when switching from raw meats to veggies to pastries.

A nice little add-on tool is a scraper to transfer the sliced or chopped food from the cutting board to the pan or bowl. There are even cutting boards with measuring cups built in to make preparation a breeze. Another essential for slicing and grating is a mandoline with various blades. For ease in clean-up, look for one that is dishwasher safe. A food chopper or food processor makes quick work of chopping and dicing.