

**BEST  
8-INCHERS**

# A MAN'S GUIDE TO ACE CHEF'S KNIVES

Every guy needs a good knife – our blade-wielding expert explains how to sharpen up your knowledge and pick the right one for you



**Natalie McVeigh, commercial director of I.O. Shen knives, has sold the sharpest tools in the trade to Jamie Oliver and Heston Blumenthal. She tells us how to pick the perfect knife, and work it like a pro.**

**01** The 8in chef's knife is the one you'll see most regularly used in a professional kitchen, because it's a good all-rounder. You've got a nice depth to the heel [where the blade meets the handle]; you've got a good length, so you can use it as a carver; you've got an acute tip, to do intricate work like skinning a chicken; and it's not too big and cumbersome – it's a one-size-fits-all knife.

**02** The more money you pay, the better the knife. Anything below £65 or £70 for an 8in chef, you're looking at mass-market knives. But if you spend an extra £15, what you'll get is an elite knife. So the price jump isn't huge, but the quality jump is gigantic.

**03** Supermarket knives are an abomination, absolutely hideous. Most people choose a knife based on price. They'll look at a knife and go, "Twenty-five pounds, I guess that's OK." But the quality of steel is so bad that once the knives have gone blunt, you may as well throw them away and buy some more. You buy cheap, you buy twice – invest in good quality in the first place and enjoy it.

**04** People should be looking for the hardest blade possible, for the least amount of money. Stainless steel, whether it's knives or pot handles or racking in a warehouse, is rated for hardness using the Rockwell rating (HRC). The hardest that you can manufacture stainless steel – before it becomes brittle and starts cracking – is known as HRC 62.

**05** Keeping your knife sharp is almost more important than buying the right one. If you buy the best knife in the world and you use the wrong method of sharpening, you may as well have bought a £3.99 number. My first port of call would be a whetstone (which looks like a little tiny brick). Put the blade on there and tip it to find your angle, until you feel it biting. Then lock your arms and move them either left to right or in a circular movement to sharpen.

**06** You've heard the saying, "A blunt knife is more dangerous than a sharp knife." Well, it's true. I do lots of demos, and the times I've cut myself are when I've blunted my knife to show how a sharpener works. Once you've set a sharp knife into food, it's not going anywhere but down. Blunt knives slip all the time.

**07** I test for sharpness using my fingerprint. I'll hold the back of the knife down, so the blade is sitting up, and I'll run the fingerprint on my thumb over it from left to right – never north-south, always east-west. You should be able to feel the blade going inbetween the lines on your thumb.

**08** The worst surfaces to cut on to are glass and marble: instant blunting. Plastic's OK, but the problem with plastic chopping boards is they're bacteria traps: if you've been cutting meat, sometimes you can't get your scourer into the grooves your knife has created, so the bacteria stays there and festers. Wooden chopping boards are really good. They're forgiving on your blade and the cuts give them character.

**09** Never clean high-quality knives in the dishwasher. The salt in the system is quite corrosive and can start eating away at your steel. And from a safety point of view, if you put the knife in blade up (because you don't want to blunt it), when you put your hand in to dig your cups out, you can cut yourself – it's just bad.

## 10 HOW TO GRIP IT



**YOU SHOULD** pinch the heel of the blade (where handle meets steel) between your thumb and index finger.



**YOU COULD** rest your index finger on the back of the blade – though you might develop a sore spot.



**YOU SHOULDN'T** grip the handle like a broadsword; you're not a knight, and you'll lose control of your blade.

Tsuki Japanese Chef Knife, £59.99, nisbets.co.uk



**FOLDED-STEEL BEAUTY**  
Steel can be folded over and over again to turn flimsy HRC 30 metal into a chef-worthy HRC 60 knife. This technique produces cool wavy lines, like those on this 8in chef's knife from Japan.

Lion Sabatier Idéal Cook's Knife, £62.95, kitchenkapers.com



**CLASSIC FRENCH DESIGN**  
Made in the Thiers region of France, these are some of the most highly regarded knives on the planet. Sadly, there are also a bunch of cheapo imitations bearing the Sabatier name. Beware.

G-2 Global Cook's Knife, £89.99, nisbets.co.uk



**MARKET-LEADING CHOPPER**  
Family-owned Japanese knife maker Global first hit the UK market 25-odd years ago. Now instantly recognisable, their handcrafted knives can be found in the hands of Michel Roux Jr, among others.

I.O. Shen Chef's Knife, £84.95, ioshen.co.uk



**EXTRA-HARD BLADE**  
A super-hard core of HRC 62 steel is sandwiched between layers of much softer HRC 10, which act like a shock absorber, giving you a razor-sharp cutting edge that won't crack under pressure.

Dick 1905 Chef's Knife, £82.79, nisbets.co.uk



**BIG GERMAN DICK**  
The symmetrical steel rings on the handle are connected to the blade itself, giving you not only a unique look, but an extra-strong knife to boot. Or to slice. Or chop, whatever.

## SWISS ARMY QUALITY

A lot of established brands like Tefal and Le Creuset have tried and failed to move into the knife market. But Victorinox, sole supplier of multi-purpose knives to the work-shy Swiss army, has managed not to follow in their badly worn shoes. The result is a quality cutter that's as sharp as it looks.

Victorinox Fully Forged Cook's Knife, £95.99, nisbets.co.uk

