

Looking to make some cookware changes?

Looking to make some cookware changes soon? The choices are endless, but good cookware truly does make a difference in your cooking experience.

If you can answer yes to any of the following questions, it's probably time to go shopping:

Does your favorite soup pot (you know, the one with all the dings and knicks on the exterior that resemble a well-used army combat helmet?)

Has the babysitter's metal fork scraped every bit of the finish from the surface of your favorite non-stick scrambled egg pan?

Does that \$10 skillet you bought at the local five and dime preheat to 400 degrees in 2.5 seconds flat?

Shopping for new cookware can be down-right overwhelming due to the



enormous number of options available everywhere, all varied in quality and cost. No wonder it's so difficult to choose what will work best for outfitting your kitchen right. Instead of purchasing an entire cookware set, I recommend the purchase of a few good-quality, sturdy pieces that you'll use over a lifetime. Here are my top three pots and pans that I use nearly every day:

- 12 inch stainless steel skillet with a tight-fitting lid

This is my go-to pan in the kitchen. Because brown is not a color but rather a flavor we cook, caramelization is tremendously important. This guy lets you brown meats and veggies quickly, and if you choose to pan fry a chicken, you can be assured that a nice 2 1/2 - 3 lb. fryer will fit perfectly. Because the lid fits snugly, you can brown off meats (such as roast or short ribs), add the liquid, then cover and oven braise. Once your meat is fork-tender, the skillet is removed from the oven where the pan juices can then be reduced on the stove top to make a finishing sauce - all from this single skillet! A good stainless steel skillet that has an aluminum core sandwiched in the center retains heat for maximum browning and even heat across the surface - exactly what

you want. Plan on spending about \$120 for this heavy-duty workhorse; my guy is the all-clad version and I love it.

Cast iron Dutch oven with enamel-coated interior, and a heavy lid

A Dutch oven is the vessel you need for those slow braises, soups and stews, AND it's also great for deep frying. Thick, tall sides make for splatter-free browning and the cast iron core ensures heat retention like no other. Another grand feature of cast iron is the slow heat transfer; by adding the heavy lid you'll find that your Sunday pot roast will be more succulent and tender due to minimal evaporation during the cooking process. My choice here is the Lodge Logic 6 quart dutch oven, though I'd love to braise with the Le Creuset French 7 quart oven one day soon.

Grandma's seasoned cast iron skillet Hopefully you were the one in the fam-

ily who inherited Grandma's skillet, and if it's about 10 inches in size, that's perfect because you can still lift it without the worry of a hernia. I've never used mine to bonk my husband (yes, I've thought about it), but create in it regularly: deep dish pizza, crispy oven bacon, upside down apple cake and, lately, creamed eggs that I serve over toast for a quick evening meal. If Grandma didn't leave you hers, try the Lodge cast iron skillet.

P.S. You'll also want to have a 2-3 quart sauce pan in your repertoire, along with a nice non-stick skillet so you can teach the kids how to make omelet's that slide right out of the pan.

Certified Personal Chef and Speaker, ChefAlli is a Culinary Instructor for Hy-Vee and a Kansas Press Association contributing columnist. Watch for her new website launch in 2012!

Sod town program of meeting

"Verney: Santa, Sod Town and Sons and Daughters" will be the feature presentation at the Thomas County Historical Society's annual meeting on Thursday, at 11 a.m. (Mountain Time). Carol Thiel will highlight the life of local historian Verney Kear, who not only served

as Colby's beloved Santa Claus but was the founder of a popular tourist stop on Highway 24 called "Sod Town."

Kear also founded an organization called "Sons and Daughters of the Soddies" which offered membership to anyone who had lived,

taught or worked in a sod building.

The program will be held at the Prairie Museum of Art and History, 1905 S. Franklin Avenue, Colby and includes lunch. The charge is \$5. Call (785) 460-4590 to make a reservation.

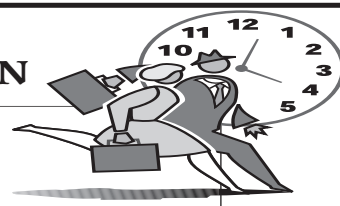
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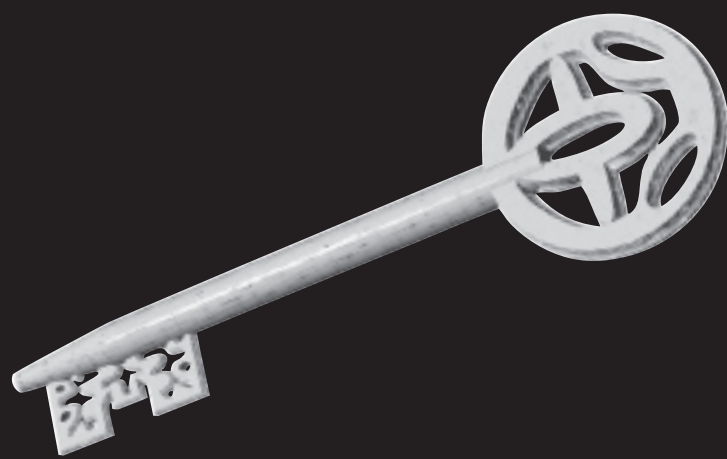
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