

How to Sharpen Knife Skills in the Kitchen

Helpful suggestions with safety in mind from CookingwithAlicia.com

Boston, February 20, 2007 - As a young girl, I was very impressed by the knife handling skills of the Benihana chefs and knife throwers who tossed those blades around so skillfully. Those guys never faltered and had all of their fingers.

Nowadays the desire to improve skills regarding “knife techniques” is highlighted in the recently published results of *Bon Appétit's 10th Annual Readers' Survey*.

I read the results and wondered what it meant. The first thing I thought about was that people wanted to use a knife in the same way they see it done on TV. But what knife techniques do people really need to understand? Are there special things that cooks do with knives that I haven't learned in my many years of cooking?

Since there was no supporting information given with the survey's summary, I'm making these suggestions to home cooks who want to improve their knife skills:

1. Forget what you see celebrity chefs, iron chefs and restaurant chefs doing with knives. They are professionals. They do it for a living. Sure, it looks real fancy when they go at almost the speed of light chopping onions or parsley, but that takes a long time to get perfect.
2. Buy good knives and keep them sharp. Learn how to use a steel or honing stone.
3. Don't hold a knife so that you draw the sharp edge towards you. Too many people have been hurt slicing a bagel in half.
4. If slicing round ingredients like onions, cut them in half first and place the flat part on the cutting surface, then slice or chop. Trying to steady something round and chopping or slicing it is the first step to the hospital.
5. Always curl your fingertips in and under your knuckles to hold the item you're cutting.
6. Use a knife at your own pace. Don't worry if you are a slowpoke. Keeping your fingers safe is more important.
7. Learn how to rock a knife rather than drawing it across an ingredient like a saw. For example, when slicing carrots place the knife tip on the cutting surface and lift only the handle leaving the tip of the blade on the surface, then rock the knife. It's this technique that makes celebrity chefs look so cool and fast.
8. Keep a first-aid kit in the kitchen in case you need it.

And don't smoke! I once badly sliced the tip of a finger and went to the hospital. The ER doctor asked me if I smoked. I responded, “That's a weird question.”

She explained. “If you did smoke, the capillaries in your finger tips would be bad and any attempt to stitch it back together wouldn’t save your finger tip.”

All in all, my suggestions pay special attention to safety first. In addition, use good, sharp knives, go slowly and keep your fingers and hands out of the way.

Visit www.cookingwithalicia.com for recipes, cooking instruction, tools, techniques and more.

The author, Alicia Shea, is the creator and major force behind CookingwithAlicia.com

CookingwithAlicia.com, your online cooking assistant™, was created by Alicia Shea to make cooking fun and rewarding. The site simplifies cooking to suit today’s busy lifestyles and provides a complete cooking environment, including interesting recipes, helpful meal-planning and shopping list tools. Unlike other websites, TV shows or cookbooks, CookingwithAlicia.com provides everything in one place for the home cook as he or she needs it with an easy-to-use format and sense of humor.

Bon Appétit reference PR: <http://www.prnewswire.com/cgi-bin/stories.pl?ACCT=104&STORY=/www/story/02-09-2007/0004524486&EDATE>

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