



10. KITCHEN-AID MIXER—This might be a bit large to qualify as a gadget, but it whips the hell out of anything, works out any flour clump and pulls your rye bread dough into shape. Easy to clean and practical attachments... a necessity of any home chef. I named mine Merlin.

TOP TO BOTTOM TOOLS OF A VERSATILE CHEF

by chef scotty wagner

We all have that favorite pair of jeans that hug our tush just right, or that timeless shirt that seems to make you look sexy yet sophisticated—just like Matthew McConaughey in *A Time to Kill*. Then it should come as no surprise, that your kitchen is really no different than your closet. The time has come to box up and donate those old kitchen thingamajigs that you haven't used in the last year. Time to break out your Citibank VISA card as you hunt the aisles of Macy's home store for new kitchen game. There are in fact, only a handful of gadgets that are truly necessary to the everyday self-inspired cook. The difference is whether you're buying the real Acqua di Gio, or settling for a knock-off at half the price which falls short of quality, doesn't last as long and ultimately lacks in its purpose to stimulate the senses of others. You don't need a lot of the meaningless or trivial; you just need a bit of the right stuff. Interestingly enough, isn't that true for almost every component of our lives?

HERE ARE SOME OF MY FAVORITE ESSENTIALS:

1. MICROPLANE ZESTER—The classic gadget. What would I do without my Microplane? I use it on everything from cheese to spices to chocolate to citrus—even works on stubborn toenails too!

2. WARING PRO IMMERSION BLENDER—Don't dump your blender, but this handheld gadget will cut down on those dirty prep dishes, as it gets into any crevice. Great for pureeing soups and sauces of all sorts, this one has virtually replaced my food processor. I love this tool and sleep with it tucked beneath my pillow at night lest the tooth fairy sneak up on me.

3. SPICE GRINDER—A regular coffee bean grinder designated for spices works wonders. I recommend buying whole spices and pulverizing as needed to maintain freshness of the essential oils. At the very least invest in a good pepper mill!



4. SALAD SPINNER—Yes, it takes up room in the cupboards, but it also does double duty as a storage bowl for freshly washed greens. Bugs are there folks—you need to wash all of your greens, especially those fab organic, farm-raised fruits and veggies.

5. MANUAL JUICER—Not everyone uses a juicer on a daily basis, but for those who do, a well-designed one is so much better than a small reamer or citrus juicer. A powerful juicer is a great gadget for anyone who likes it fresh, be it for mojitos or lemon poppyseed cake.



6. KNIVES—Goodwill will gladly take your outdated 1992 house-warming gift of Faberware knives. You really only need four quality knives—I prefer Wüsthof stainless steel as the tried and true original set of epicurean weapons. An 8" Chefs knife covers 90 percent of your needs, then a pairing knife for tiny tasks, a long, serrated knife for breads and cakes. Finally, a boning knife for attacking that turkey carcass or removing the pinbones from a trout fillet.



7. MANDOLINE SLICER—Another favorite. This speeds things up in the kitchen like no other tool or gadget. It slices, minces, and juliennes. But maintain healthy fear and respect for this French-engineered tool or you're likely to lose a few fingertips!



8. SPOONULA—A silicone Spoonula can withstand the fires of hell (or at least up to 500 degrees) and its curved bowl makes it easier than a flat spatula for scooping food. You'll rid your bowl of that extra bit of product that's clinging like a needy lover.



9. ISI CREAM WHIPPER—Cool Whip abandoned long ago? How else can you splash some cream into a cylinder, load a canister of nitrous oxide, shake and serve fresh whipped cream? Be that on a plate or your lover's sweetened nipple...