# Grater

*Would You Like Some Cheese with That?*



Just looking at an old-fashioned box grater is enough to make your knuckles hurt. Each side of the metal tower was speckled with sharp burrs of different sizes. You strummed the tower with a piece of hard cheese, lost focus as you watched it disappear into the burrs, and ended up shredding your flesh. The grater also seemed to consume more than it harvested, and it wasn't any fun to clean.

Compared to its predecessor—a two-sided sheet of gouged metal—the freestanding box initially seemed like a nifty 3-D tool; but it turned out to offer more textures than anyone could need and take up more space than it merited. After all, the grater has never been more than one of those intermittently indispensable tools. You don't need it very often, but sometimes nothing else will do. Substitute a knife or a vegetable peeler to shave, slice, peel, dice, or crush and the results are less than successful.

Parmesan cheese is reason enough to own a grater. A sprinkle imparts disproportionate depth to almost any dish that is not dessert, and some recipes can't work without it.

For a hundred years or so, the kitchen grater continued to work adequately, never supplying the deep pleasure of a sharp chef's knife or a guillotine egg-slicer.

> For a hundred years or so, box graters continued to work adequately . . .

The breakthrough came in 1994. Grater frustration forced Lorraine Lee, a Canadian housewife, to swipe her husband's new woodworking tool and misuse it to zest an orange. The slim, elegant file-shaped wood scraper with an ultrasharp rasp was a novelty at the couple's hardware store. The Lees were so amazed by the fast and exacting zesting that they began selling the rasps, repackaged as kitchen graters, through their mail-order tool catalog.

The manufacturers of those rasps had also discovered their use through accident and adaptation. For twenty years, Richard and Jeff Grace, two brothers from Russellville, Arkansas, had been making high-tech printer





parts using a photochemical machining technique. (The process cuts metal using chemicals rather than conventional hand tooling.) The brothers had been fascinated by the accumulation of menacing, razor-edged scrap—sharper than the usual debris in machine shops; that hazard inspired them to create a series of very sharp woodworking tools, brand-named Microplane.

After Mrs. Lee's zest success, the Graces began making and marketing stainless steel food graters with hundreds of tiny razor-sharp teeth. The Microplane graters were not only efficient, but they also allowed cooks to reverse the grating process, passing the food over the grater—like a bow over a violin—in smooth, elegant gestures. With less pressure required, and no need to lean into the motions, there were fewer flesh wounds. (Focus is still crucial, though.)

The graters are available in several textures, from fine grating to wide shaving, but the "classic" Zester/Grater transforms the hardest of hard cheeses, citrus, or chocolates into fluffy ingredients indispensable to some of the world's most transporting recipes.

# Wine Opener

*Works Like Magic . . .*

The sommelier opens your wine invisibly and instantly. With practiced speed, her classic waiter's corkscrew tears the foil and impales and extracts the cork, all while staying hidden in her hand. This is the professional way to liberate wine in a restaurant, a place that conceals the messy labors of meal preparation and makes food appear magically.

Home, however, is place to revel in the manual dynamics of food making. For this, nothing has surpassed the double-winged lever corkscrew. It performs a fascinating ballet on the theme of mechanical advantage. It also fits in a drawer, costs almost nothing, lasts forever, and requires minimal manual strength or skill.

Most perfect of all is the classic,





THE SMART LIST

## COOKING

WHEN IT COMES TO KITCHENWARE, it's important to touch and handle before you buy; you don't want to end up with a prohibitively heavy stockpot or a knife handle that just doesn't feel right. In many cases, I've based my sourcing recommendations on whether you can visit the products in person, handle them, and purchase them without the additional costs of packaging and shipping.

Another thing to keep in mind: Just about anything made of cast iron, stainless steel, or glass can be bought very old, old, or slightly used at very low prices via online listings, thrift stores, or yard sales.

**CHEF'S KNIFE**
- Try: The 8"-stamped stainless steel version with plastic handle from Sanelli's Premana Professional line
- Find it: Kitchen and restaurant supply stores

*Cost: $38 to $47*

**PARING KNIFE**
- Try: The 4"-stamped stainless steel version with plastic handle from Sanelli's Premana Professional line
- Find it: Kitchen and restaurant supply stores

*Cost: $9 to $12*

**BREAD KNIFE**
- 9" to 9½", with scalloped teeth, a stainless steel blade, and a handle in wood or other material
- Find it: Interesting kitchen supply stores; online

*Cost: $20 to $30*

**CUTTING BOARD**
- 18" x 17" Richlite board by Epicurean
- Find it: High-end kitchen supply stores; online

*Cost: $20 to $25*

**MEASURING SPOON**
- "The "Nuscup"
- Find it: Some big-box stores; kitchen supply stores

*Cost: $10 to $15*

**MEASURING CUP**
- Good Grips Angled Measuring Cup by OXO, 2-cup model
- Find it: Any purveyor of kitchen supplies

*Cost: $8 to $10*





**MIXING BOWL**
- 5-quart stainless steel mixing bowl
- Plain, shallow, and lightweight
- Find it: Any purveyor of kitchen supplies

*Cost: $25 to $30, depending on the thickness of the steel and detailing*

**SALAD SPINNER**
- Easy Spin Salad Spinner by Zyliss
- Find it: High-end kitchen supply stores; some big-box stores

*Cost: $20 to $30*

**MESH STRAINER**
- Stainless-steel, fine mesh
- 4" basket diameter
- Find it: Any purveyor of kitchen supplies

*Cost: $8 to $15*

**SALTCELLAR**
- No shakers. A dispenser for pinching and sprinkling, suitable for both table and kitchen counter
- Try: A polished stainless-steel sugar cube dispenser with a pivoting hood
- Find it: Some kitchen and restaurant supply stores

*Cost: $15 to $20*

**PEPPER MILL**
- Peugeot's small Bistro pepper mill, in dark-stained beech wood
- Find it: Kitchen and restaurant supply stores

*Cost: $25 to $35*

**CAN OPENER**
- Swing-A-Way portable can opener, model No. 407
- Find it: Corner stores; big-box stores; department stores . . . anywhere

*Cost: $10 to $13*

**SCISSORS**
- Fiskars No. 8
- Find it: Any purveyor of stationery, hardware, or sewing supplies

*Cost: $10 to $15*

**COOKING SPOON**
- 12" to 14" stainless steel
- Find it: Kitchen and restaurant supply stores

*Cost: $10 to $15*

**TONGS**
- 12"-long stainless steel, with locking mechanism
- Find it: Kitchen and restaurant supply stores

*Cost: $10 to $15*



**SPATULA**
- Stainless steel
- Find it: Kitchen and restaurant supply stores

*Cost: $10 to $15*

**VEGETABLE PEELER**
- OXO Good Grips Swivel Peeler
- Try: For simplicity the Kuhn Rikon vegetable peeler (plastic handle and Y-shaped carbon steel blade) is as tiny as can be and goes for about $4.
- Find it: Any purveyor of kitchen supplies

*Cost: About $10*

**GRATER**
- 8"-long Microplane Zester/Grater
- Find it: Any purveyor of kitchen supplies

*Cost: About $15*

**WINE OPENER**
- Stainless-steel double-winged lever corkscrew
- Find it: Any purveyor of kitchen supplies

*Cost: Under $20*

**MEAT THERMOMETER**
- "The "Thermapen" thermocouple
- Find it: Online, at www.thermoworks.com

*Cost: Under $90*

**FRY PAN**
- Lodge Manufacturing's 10" cast-iron "Pro-Logic" skillet
- Factory seasoned with a proprietary soy-based, rust-preventive finish
- Eco-easing: This fry pan will far outlast your kitchen, or any appliance in it!
- Find it: Any purveyor of kitchen supplies

*Cost: About $20*

**DUTCH OVEN**
- Lodge Manufacturing's 7-quart, 12" cast-iron "Pro-Logic" Dutch oven
- Factory seasoned with a proprietary soy-based, rust-preventive finish
- Eco-easing: This Dutch oven will far outlast your kitchen, or any appliance in it!
- Find it: Any purveyor of kitchen supplies

*Cost: About $60*

**STOCKPOT**
- 8-quart, stainless steel
- Aluminum disc in the pot's bottom, stainless-steel lid, riveted handles
- Find it: Try restaurant supply stores first.

*Cost: $40 to $60*

**SAUCEPAN**
- 2-quart, stainless steel
- Aluminum disc in the pan's bottom, stainless-steel lid, riveted handles
- Find it: Try restaurant supply stores first.

*Cost: $30 to $50*





**BROILING/ ROASTING PAN**
- The WaterBroiler–WaterRoaster Pan
- Designed, manufactured, and sold by Lee Dranow Smithson
- Find it: Online, at www.waterbroiler.com (Dranow Cookware Company)

*Cost: About $30; features a one-year money-back guarantee*

**MICROWAVE OVEN**
- Midsize model made by Sharp or other reputable company
- 1 to 1.2 cubic foot capacity, about 1200 watts
- Find it: Purveyors of small appliances

*Cost: Under $90*

**TOASTER OVEN**
- Six-slice, digital convection toaster oven made by Krups (simplest model available)
- Eco-easing: For small quantities of food, uses far less power than a built-in oven/broiler.
- Find it: www.krups.com features a list of retailers.

*Cost: $150 or less; look for sale models for better pricing.*

**KETTLE**
- Bottom's the electric water kettle
- Eco-easing: Uses less energy than a traditional stovetop kettle.
- Find it: Department stores; online; big-box stores; some kitchen supply stores

*Cost: About $35 to $45*

**TEAPOT**
- Borosilicate glass teapot (with or without strainer)
- Find it: Tea and coffee supply stores; kitchen supply stores

*Cost: $35 to $45*

**DISH DRAINER**
- PVA foam towel, aka "superabsorbent swim towel," aka "auto shammy"
- Approximately 18" x 24"
- Find it: Auto supply section of big-box stores or purveyors of outdoor gear

*Cost: $10 to $15*

**DISH TOWEL**
- 100% linen
- Eco-easing: Comes from flax, a sustainable crop; lightweight and compact in the wash and quick to line or machine dry; long-lasting and durable
- Find it: High-end kitchen supply stores; purveyors of European linen

*Cost: $10*