

Knives: Form & Function

In its simplest terms a knife is a sharpened piece of metal. As a chef the term becomes much more finite as each knife has a very specific function in the kitchen. A single knife can perform multiple tasks, these tasks however can be done much more efficiently and safer with a knife designed for the job at hand.

I am often asked why a sharp knife is said to be less dangerous. A sharp knife requires less force, reducing the amount of pressure used to cut through an object.

Then there is the opposing view. Can't a sharp knife be just as dangerous? Yes, but if the knife is used properly, that means for its intended purpose and in the manner it was designed the risk become reduced.

All knives should be used with caution and considered sharp. They can be dangerous if not used for their intended purpose. Never cut bones or frozen food with an ordinary knife. The blade will snap increasing the risk of an accident, destroying your food product.

This leads use into a discussion of the function of knives and the differences between them. The list of knives below can be considered the standard.

1. **Boning Knife:** The primary function of the Boning knife is to break down fowl into its parts and trim meats. It is designed to follow the bones of the carcass and surface of meats, getting into small crevices, obtaining the maximum amount of product.
2. **Bread Knife:** The Breads knife is a serrated knife design to cut through products using a sawing motion as with all serrated knives they grip into the surface of the product providing a smooth cut with the least amount of effort and damage to the product.
3. **Butcher Knife:** The butcher knife has one primary task, to trim and cut up raw meats, preparing them for production.
4. **Chef knife:** The Chef knife is the all essential knife used in the kitchen, it is design to dice, chop, slice and cut up products. The design enables the user to rock the knife and slice through food products in a fast and safe manner with minimal fatigue.
5. **Cimitar:** The Cimitar is a form of butcher knife which differs in shape.
6. **Cleaver:** The cleaver is used to break apart bones. It is designed with a thick spin and heft to safely chop through bones.
7. **Paring knife:** Primarily a garnishing tool and all around "utility" knife to peel, slice and garnish foods.
8. **Slicing Knife:** A slicing knife is designed to cut through cooked meats, maintaining the desired thickness.