

Begin a good meal with quality pots and pans

Before we start today's column, we have a comment from the column we wrote on August 3 about music and food. We got an e-mail from Brian Peroff, the music director for AM740, thanking us for mentioning his *Prime Time Bandstand* program and specifically his program on music and food. But he did have a little correction for us. We credited Perry Como with having done *That's Amore*, when in fact it was Dean Martin! Our most sincere apologies to Dean! Thanks so much for sorting us out Brian, and keep on with the good tunes!

Lori Gysel & Gerry Kentner



Today we'll devote our column to answering the question of one of our readers: *All of my pots and pans are in really rough shape. I'm going to go out and buy new ones. Have you got any suggestions or recommendations on what to buy?*

Excellent question and thank you for sending it to us! I'm going to give you probably more information than you wanted in order to make sure you are prepared when you head out to the store.

First of all, you need to determine what you are going to be cooking in order to determine which pots and pans you will need. (And if you aren't the cook in the house—then you'd better include them on this discussion or you could have a very grumpy cook on your hands! If you are ever buying pots and pans as a gift for someone else, I would strongly recommend that you buy a gift certificate at a store that sells a wide variety of

products and let them choose their own).

If you cook a lot of eggs, fish or crepes, then you'll need a small non-stick pan. If you cook a lot of braised meats, then you'll want a brazier—also known as a dutch oven. It is a medium deep pot with a well-fitting lid and two handles. The handles are such that the entire pot can spend many hours in the oven.

If you make a lot of homemade stocks and soups, then you'll want a stock-pot—a large, deep, straight-sided pot.

If you like to caramelize lots of meats and veggies, as well as make a lot of one-pan suppers and a lot of sauces, then a straight-sided sauté pan is the one for you. Add in a couple of saucepans and you're all set.

I prefer all my pans to have metal handles so that they can be placed in the oven whenever needed. I also like to have a mix—a couple of non-stick fry pans and a couple of regular sauté pans.

Next you need to consider the thickness of the metal and the type of metal the pans are made from. A heavy gauge pan will cook more evenly than one made from thin metal. The thickness on the bottom of the pan is the most important. (Think heavy!)

As for the kind of metal; different metals have different speeds at which they transfer heat. There are many different materials that pans are made from, but I will go through some of the most widely sold and used:

1. Cast iron: This is a great material because of its ability to transfer heat evenly and to hold high temperatures for long periods of time. However, it cracks easily if dropped, it is very heavy to handle and it rusts quickly if not properly cared for. I would recommend everyone have one cast iron skillet.

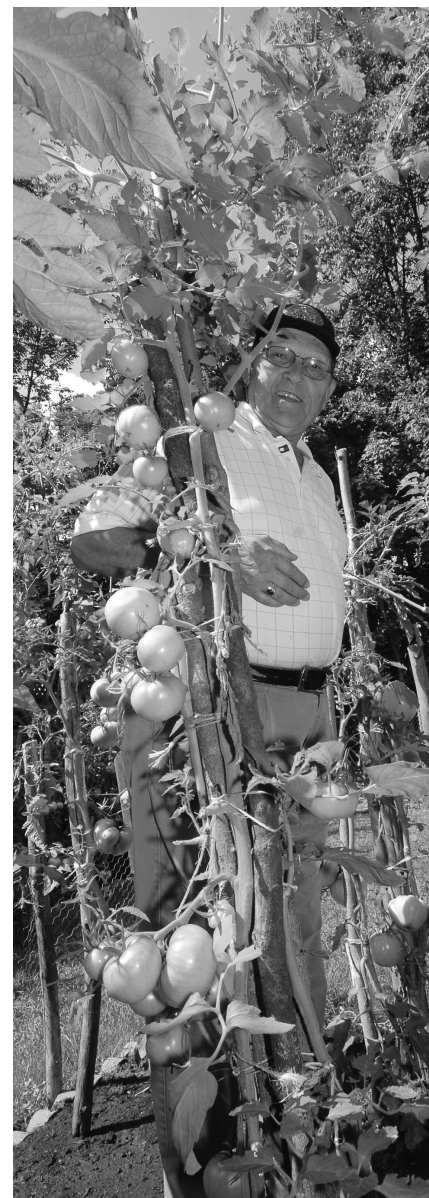
2. Stainless steel: On its own, stainless steel is a poor heat conductor. However, combined with a heavy layer of copper or aluminum bonded to the bottom of the pan, it makes a great pan. The stainless steel part offers the durability, hardness and it will not react with foods—the copper and aluminum addition offers much better heat conducting. These pans are excellent and usually expensive. This would be my first choice for the majority of my pots and pans.

3. Copper: is the best heat conductor of all. Copper on its own reacts with many foods to create poisonous compounds, so copper pans must be lined with another metal. Copper used to be widely used, however, these pans are extremely expensive and they require a great deal of care. Today they are mostly decorative.

4. Aluminum: is a very good conductor of heat and it is light weight, making pots and pans easy to handle. Untreated aluminum should not be used for storage or long cooking of strong acids because it reacts chemically with the foods. However, you can get pans made of anodized aluminum—these are less porous and therefore do not react with foods the way that untreated aluminum does. Unfortunately, the anodized aluminum pans are quite expensive and not quite as durable standard aluminum.

Have fun with your shopping and keep cooking!

(Lori and Gerry can be reached at whatscookin@independentfreepress.com)



How about them tomatoes!

Antonio Chita of Gollop Crescent shows off his extraordinary garden of beefsteak tomatoes, many of the plants more than seven feet tall. When asked his secret to the super plants, Chitas says it's no secret—simply cow manure.

Photo by Ted Brown

Peach Salsa

Ingredients

- 2 peaches, medium ripe
- 1/4 cup diced red pepper
- 1/4 cup diced red onion
- 1 green onion, sliced thin
- juice of one lime
- 1/4 cup chopped fresh cilantro
- salt and pepper to taste

Method

1. Remove the skin from the peaches by peeling or by dropping in boiling water for 30 seconds or so and then just pull off the skin.
2. Squeeze lime juice into a non-reactive bowl.



3. Chop peaches and place in the lime juice
4. Add remaining ingredients and let sit for an hour or so for flavours to incorporate.

Cook's note: I served this with crab cakes one night, then with crackers as an antipasto on another night. It would be great with any fish or pork dish as well.

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