





nt Review Dish Towels

absorbent, tough, and versatile towel. Must be handy, flexible, attractive, to tackle multiple tasks. BY KATE SHANNON

KEY Good ★★★ Fair ★★ Poor ★

utinizized dish towels, Ripple Towel aced our seemed a little expen- toughest tasks. Worse, d that its seams some- er several washes. So e drawing board and es in a broad selection es from a kitchenware d restaurant suppli- a new cloth diaper— swears by them—and n cotton, which was in previous tests, we etic microfiber towel n for wicking mois- wels (priced from), including our old o work. using it to dry a dish rst and foremost, e absorbent. To y, we dangled an inch a tub of water for ing towels before and in, this time drop- the surface of a tub wipping up a big spill. , while cotton towels e worst towels seemed er, floating lazily and e to submerge. In the atched weaves acting r zigzagged along ed up horizontal rib- ts, traveled steadily up yed put in thick terry. d thinner areas that t water and thicker at held on to it. r dangling test after through 10 laundry t. All became dra- orbent. Why? New in leftover “sizing,” ent that repels water. dling towels became absorbent, taking in mer winner did when the microfiber towel, wels with mixed tex- ear advantage. sh towels as kitchen m to squeeze out watery vegetables o fill in for pot- her tasks. We put sted frozen spinach d wrung the towels

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED		CRITERIA	TESTERS' NOTES
	WILLIAMS-SONOMA Striped Towels, Set of 4 Model: 29-8845570 Price: \$19.95 (\$4.99 per towel) Source: williams-sonoma.com Size (after washing): 26 by 18.5 in (3.34 sq ft) Material: Cotton, alternating strips of basket and flat weave	Absorption ★★★ Handling ★★★ Durability ★★★	Goldilocks would like this towel: It's not too thick or too thin, too big or too small. Its fabric tightened, toughened, and grew more absorbent the more we used and washed it. Stripes camouflaged stains until they washed out and kept this sturdy towel looking fresh.
	NOW DESIGNS Ripple Kitchen Towel, Set of 2 Model: 197545a Price: \$16 (\$8 per towel) Source: amazon.com Size (after washing): 25 by 18.25 in (3.17 sq ft) Material: Cotton, ribbed weave	Absorption ★★★ Handling ★★ Durability ★★★	Our previous winner still impressed with its streak-free drying, soft fabric, and excellent absorption. We'd heard complaints about unraveling but couldn't reproduce this in testing: After rigorous use and more than 26 laundry cycles, this towel showed no signs of fraying. One quibble: All that fluffy ribbing makes for a snug fit when drying tight corners.
	RECOMMENDED WITH RESERVATIONS		
	AUNT MARTHA'S Flour Sack Dish Towels, Set of 7 Model: TTS28 (28 x 28) Price: \$15.99 (\$2.28 per towel) Size (after washing): 26.25 by 26.25 in (4.79 sq ft) Material: Cotton flour sack, flat weave	Absorption ★★ Handling ★★ Durability ★★★	This traditional flour-sack towel was big but thin, fitting neatly inside a champagne flute. It dried without leaving behind lint and felt good in hand. It was terrific for squeezing spinach. However, big spills overwhelmed its flat weave, it was mediocre as an oven mitt, and shadowy stains persisted (although you can bleach it).
	KUSHIES Washable Flat Diapers, Set of 6 Model: D-1026 Price: \$19.99 (\$3.33 per towel) Size (after washing): 28 by 24 in (4.67 sq ft) Material: Cotton, flat weave	Absorption ★★½ Handling ★★ Durability ★½	This cloth diaper was great for drying dishes, for squeezing vegetables, and as a potholder, but after washing, it felt like a baby blanket—flannel and fuzzy. At nearly 5 square feet, it was an awkward size for kitchen work. Stains hung on, but the cloth can be bleached.
NOT RECOMMENDED			
	COTTON CRAFT Terry Waffle Weave Kitchen Towels, Set of 2 Model: X00D02AKH Price: \$5.99 (\$3 per towel) Size (after washing): 26.75 by 15.25 in (2.83 sq ft) Material: Cotton, lattice weave	Absorption ★½ Handling ★½ Durability ★½	Although its absorption improved after several washes, when new, this towel repelled liquid. Its thick lattice texture absorbed water where it touched rather than transporting liquid through the towel. Its label banned bleach and insisted that the towel be washed separately in cold water.
	NOUVELLE LEGENDE Microfiber Kitchen Towels, Set of 2 Model: NL-MT-R-N-2 Price: \$7.95 (\$3.98 per towel) Size (after washing): 27.25 by 16 in (3.03 sq ft) Material: Microfiber, ribbed weave	Absorption ★★★ Handling zero Durability ★	This superabsorbent microfiber towel did many things well. But it turned from ivory to pea green after laundering, and testers hated its static feel. When pressed into service as a potholder, it smelled bad and felt alarmingly hot. It just doesn't seem like a dish towel to us.
	KEEBLE OUTLETS Premium Dish Towels, 24-Ounce, Set of 12 Model: 24-ounce Price: \$23.99 (\$2 per towel) Size (after washing): 22.25 by 14 in (2.16 sq ft) Material: Cotton, herringbone weave	Absorption ★½ Handling ★ Durability ★	This ultrathin restaurant towel is cheap by the dozen, but its crisp appearance quickly went downhill, and its performance was underwhelming in every category. Small, floppy, and skimpy, the towel was gray, stained, and covered in lint by the end of testing.

that modest amount of food. Thicker towels were harder to squeeze than thin-to-medium-weight towels. We also used each towel to remove hot baking dishes filled with pie weights from a 450-degree oven. Bigger, thicker towels were harder to control, but the thinnest, smallest towels felt inadequate. (Warning: Microfiber is prone to melt; don't use it as a potholder. Also, never use a wet towel to handle a hot dish.) Our favorite midweight cotton towels readily folded into rectangles—about 10 by 7 inches—and felt secure while keeping our hands cool.

champagne flutes. No surprise that the thickest towels felt clumsy and made us fear dropping our glassware. Not so with thinner towels, which slipped into every cranny and dried thoroughly. The microfiber towel turned in another excellent performance, but we just couldn't overcome our dislike of its prickly, squeaky surface.

Finally, to test durability we poured on beet juice, mustard, wine, and oil and let the towels soak over a long weekend. Then we put them through 26 full laundry cycles to mimic six months of weekly washing. Within a few washes,

had shrunk, but as long as they kept close to their original size and hemmed edges stayed flat and intact, we didn't fault them. On the plus side, midweight cotton towels with combination weaves seemed to grow thicker and sturdier.

In the end, the Williams-Sonoma Striped Towels (\$19.95 for a set of four) emerged the clear winner. They featured cotton fabric with strips of basket weave alternating with flat weave, so they absorbed well without excessive bulk and only got tougher and thirstier with use. At more than 3 square feet, they're generous without being gigantic. And they