



Here's what you should know about Professional Knives before you buy:

Few tools are as essential to the foodservice kitchen as is the commercial knife. Without it, nothing gets sliced, diced, chopped or butchered, making meal prep challenging.

Professional knives are manufactured from a variety of different materials, some for their superior performance and durability, some for their economical value. Professional knives with metal blades are either forged or stamped in the manufacturing process. Forged blades are formed when the metal is heated to a very high temperature and then pounded, either with a hammer or a press, into shape. Stamped blades are cut to shape from sheets of metal. Forged blades are normally considered to be better weighted and balanced, providing an overall better knife; however, they are typically more expensive than stamped knives. The ceramic blades of professional knives are heated to a very high temperature to achieve a very high hardness. They maintain their sharpness better than metal but are prone to chipping if mishandled.

The cutting edges of professional knives are ground in different ways for different results. Flat-ground, or straight-edge, blades are tapered from the spine of the blade to the edge and provide sturdy, consistent cutting and chopping. Hollow-edge blades, which are also known as Granton edge and are suitable for cutting and chopping, have small, hollowed-out sections that run the length of the blade. These sections help keep juices and food fragments clear of the edge to promote cleaner cuts. Serrated-edge blades have teeth that run consistently along the edge. They easily tear into foods with heavy or crusty outsides without shredding more fragile textures underneath. Hollow-ground knife blades are concavely ground into both sides of the blade, starting at about the midpoint and meeting at the bottom, for a very thin and sharp cutting edge. Hollow-ground knives are good for slicing and skinning needs, not for chopping.

The very best way to store professional knives is in a knife block, because it keeps the individual cutlery pieces separated. This prevents blade-on-blade contact that can damage the cutting edges. Hard plastic or leather briefcases and nylon roll cases are also available for commercial knife storage and are great choices for chefs who take their cutlery on the road.

Brands: Cook's Brand; Dexter; Matfer Bourgeat; Mercer Cutlery; Mundial; Victorinox;

Type: Boning; Bread; Butcher; Carving (Slicing); Chef's (Cook's); Cleaver; Filet; Paring; Utility.

Blade material: High-carbon steel; Stainless steel; Titanium; Ceramic; Plastic.

High-carbon steel blades are durable and easy to sharpen but are also susceptible to discoloring and rust. Stainless steel is also durable and much less likely to discolor than high-carbon steel, but it is more difficult to sharpen. Titanium blades are corrosion-resistant and tend to maintain their sharpness better than steel blades. Ceramic blades maintain their sharpness better than the metals do but are prone to chipping if mishandled. Plastic is not sharp.

Tang: Full; 3/4; 1/2

The tang is an extension of the blade and mates it to the handle, where it is secured with rivets. A full tang extends the entire length and shape of the handle; it requires a two-piece handle, with one piece attached to each side of the tang. Full-tang knives are usually thought to be superior in balance and weight to other styles. Professional knives with a 3/4- or 1/2-tang are secured within one-piece handles. A commercial knife with a shorter tang may not feel as well-balanced or strong but may be more economical than full-tang knives.

Handle: Wood; Stainless Steel; Composite/Plastic

The handle of a commercial knife is more than just the part you hold. It secures the blade and provides balance as you slice and chop, and it needs to be comfortable in your hand. Ill-fitting handles can cause hand fatigue, which can lead to poor results and accidents.

Wood handles look great and provide superior handling but are susceptible to contamination by bacteria. Stainless steel requires little or no maintenance but is slippery when wet. Composite/plastic handles also become slippery when wet, but they can also provide antibacterial capabilities. Many are color-coded for job-specific use.

Length: Ranges from 2" to 14", depending on knife type

Size professional knives based on what they will be used for. Paring and utility knives are typically 2 to 4 inches in length; most other types are 5 inches or longer.