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KNIFE SHARPENING 101

EXTENSION

HOW TO CARE FOR YOUR KITCHEN KNIVES AT HOME

Knife sharpening is a skill that can be mastered by nearly anyone, but it often requires considerable practice before one becomes proficient. There are many methods and means of producing a fine knife edge. Each meat cutter usually develops his/hers own favorite procedures. The following method is suggested, but each individual must adjust the procedures to the equipment he/she has available and his/her own style of working.

1.) Determining the desired bevel

The angle of the bevel placed on a knife edge will depend upon the type of knife and its intended use. A steak knife which is used primarily for cutting meat and seldom comes in contact with bone should have a long bevel. A long bevel provides a thinner cutting edge which produces less resistance while cutting. A boning knife, on the other hand, should have a shorter bevel which puts more strength behind the cutting edge to withstand the pressures encounter when the knife strikes bone.

Steak Knife - Long Bevel



15-20°

Boning Knife - Short Bevel



20-25°

2.) Establishing a bevel

The bevel, or edge of the knife, is sharpened by maintaining a consistent angle during the sharpening process. A long bevel can be established by holding the knife blade at a 15-20° angle to the stone or grinding wheel, while a short bevel is produced at a 20-25° angle. The same angle and length of bevel should be established on both sides of the blade from the heel to the point.

Motion of Blade



Knife Blade



Angle to Stone

Stone



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3.) Sharpening the knife

To sharpen the knife, grip the knife handle firmly with one hand and apply uniform pressure on the back of the blade along its entire length with the other hand. Begin at the heel of the blade with a simultaneous forward and sideward motion. Stroke the blade from heel to tip as it is moved forward across the entire face of the stone. Once you have completed a full stroke, turn the knife blade over with the handle in the same hand and stroke the other side of the blade across the stone in the opposite direction with a similar heel to point motion. Be careful to apply an equal number of strokes to each side of the blade. Use only enough strokes to establish the bevel and straighten the edge of the knife. The coarse sharpening stone will leave a rough wire edge. This can be removed by stroking the blade across a medium and fine stone in a manner similar to that described for producing a bevel. Be very careful to maintain the angle of the established bevel. Several strokes across a fine stone will smooth the bevel and remove the wire edge.

4.) Steeling/Honing a knife

The steel is used to put the finishing touch on the knife edge and to maintain the edge while it is being used. Whenever the knife edge comes in contact with bone or other hard objects, the knife edge turns, and the steel can be used to straighten it back up again. Hold the steel firmly in one hand, with the thumb on top of the handle, the knife firmly in the other hand. Place the heel of the knife near the point of the steel at the same angle it was sharpened on the stone. Slide the entire edge of the knife along the steel, then follow the same procedure for the opposite side of the knife edge. A dozen strokes on each side of the knife should be sufficient.

5.) Testing for sharpness and smoothness

Hold a piece of paper in one hand and draw the knife blade across the top edge of the paper at right angles to the paper. A sharp knife will make a smooth cut through the paper without applying pressure. Any wire edges left on the blade will catch on the paper and tear it.

Knife Sharpening Tools

- A - Tri-Stone Sharpener
- B - Fine Grit Stone
- C - Coarse Grit Stone
- D - Medium Grit Stone
- E - Fine Cut/Polishing Steel
- F - Coarse Cut Steel
- G - 8-inch Carving Knife

