

Hey there, Food Fans! Welcome to the new year!

Most people have a honing steel in their kitchen, but they don't know what it does or how to use it, so today I'm going to talk about

Honing and Sharpening Knives

There are essentially two ways for a Knife to dull. The one most people think of off the bat is blunting, where the blade edge is worn down so that it no longer comes to a point.

The other is actually minuscule bends and feathering at the blade edge. This happens a lot faster than blunting and is more common, but also easier to fix.

One thing that is important to know about a knife when doing home honing and sharpening is the angle of the blade edge. This will vary based on brand and style, so check the manufacturers' website if needed.

A honing steel, which often comes as a part of knife sets, is the tool that people often see chefs on tv using. This tool is designed to realign the edge of the blade and repair those bends and feathering.

Place the honing steel tip down on a cutting board and rest the back of the knife against it.

The closer the angle is to the manufacturer's designed angle, the better, but as long as the angle is consistent, that's fine.

Slowly pull the blade along the steel in a slicing motion, maintaining the angle, so that the entire blade comes in contact with the steel. Do this 5 times on each side, then four times and so on.

Professional chefs will usually do this at least once a day, but if it's done at home even once a week, there will be a marked improvement in the sharpness of each knife.

When it comes to actually sharpening, that is, shaving away metal on the knife to undo bluntness, there are several tools that will do the job.

Whetstones work similarly to honing steels. After wetting the stone, find the right angle of the blade and drag the blade along the stone, repeating on both sides multiple times.

A whetstone is the most basic sharpening technique, and also the hardest to do. Maintaining the perfect angle is a lot more important than with the honing steel. I would recommend more research before undertaking this technique.

Pull through sharpeners are fast and easy. Two small stones are preset to a given angle and all that needs to be done is to pull the knife through a few times. They come in various angles and often with multiple degrees of coarseness depending on how much the knife needs to be sharpened. Be sure to get one that matches the needs of your brand of knife.

Electric sharpeners work in a very similar way to pull through sharpeners, except that instead of stationary stones, they have spinning grind wheels. This extra mechanical piece speeds up the sharpening process.

The last way to sharpen your knives is to find a sharpening service in your area. Services are often fast, inexpensive and do a great job. Ask a local kitchen supply store or butcher where you can find one.

Again, professional chefs sharpen their knives much more often than home chefs need to. I recommend sharpening knives every 6-months to a year.

A proper sharpening will make a knife feel brand new again!

Happy slicing!