

## Shopping For Cookware - What To Look Out For

There are many factors which will influence the eventual outcome of a dish. The recipe itself, the quality of the ingredients and how well they were prepared and mixed, the oven and the type and effectiveness of it, along with heat distribution, and of course the chef. One of the most significant factors however is the cookware used, and this can often be overlooked. Spending money on cookware is an investment in the quality of the food you prepare in the future, and it really is a case that quality will pay off and you will reap the benefits of paying a little, or a lot extra, for quality cookware for many years to come. Some of the factors to look for will be durability, heat retention, heat conduction, distribution of heat, weight, and appearance. The one factor not to pay any attention to if possible is price, because although cheap pans are readily available, they will almost certainly fail to provide you with effective cooking for very long. I have a frying pan I paid quite a large sum of money for which is still my best pan after twenty years. I recently tried a cheap alternative as my local supermarket was selling them for very little! Needless to say, the performance on the first attempt was dismal, and after two or three uses it was ready for the bin. If your food sticks, cooks unevenly, cooks too quickly or too slowly, then the pan or pot you use will be the over-riding factor. The real difference between all the types of cookware is the metal, which is used in their construction. Iron, aluminum, steel and copper are the usual four types of metal used, and all have their own distinct advantages and disadvantages. Iron cookware is very traditional, and will not simply last you a life time but will probably either have been handed down to you from the previous generation, or be able to be handed down to the next - or even both! It is very durable, and distributes the heat well. Of course, the problem with iron is its weight, and once you have a pan full of water or food, it becomes very difficult to manoeuvre. Copper is beautiful to look at, and is a fabulous conductor of heat, distributing it very well. You'll notice in most old stately homes that the kitchens are decked out with copper as it was a very popular choice, allowing food to cook evenly and well. The appearance is very much to be desired, although it's worth being aware that it is not dishwasher safe, and needs to be cleaned by hand. The appearance can tarnish, and using vinegar or some other solution it will be necessary to clean them occasionally to keep them looking that beautiful colour. Aluminium is a much easier metal because of the fact that it is so light. It conducts heat very quickly, but partly due to its lighter density it can tend to warp. This warping won't be noticeable visibly, but will generate hot spots, which will mean that food can start to cook unevenly, burning it in places. There are some pans today which are created with a titanium base. The titanium base is forty times more durable than the steel and will not warp, giving you an even cooking base, whilst the steel or aluminium pan retains quick heat distribution and relative lightness. Of course, non stick pans and stainless steel are very popular, and certainly make cleaning a much easier task. Non stick should mean that food simply slides off, leaving little to clean, and stainless steel can simply be put in any dishwasher. At the end of the day, the choice is very much yours, but remember, you only get what you pay for, and if you take pride in your cooking, then you should take pride in your choice of cookware too.

## About the Author

Victor Epan is an expert consultant about luggage, cruises, hotels, and shopping. You will find the best marketplace for luggage, cruises, hotels, and shopping at these sites: <http://www.bags-luggage.info> , <http://www.hotels-cruises.info> , and <http://www.krishnadesign.com>

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