

THE SCRATCH KITCHEN™

GEAR SHOPPING REFERENCE CARDS

Print these cards, cut them out, and take them shopping!

Perfect for beginners starting from nothing – focus on thrift stores, dollar stores, or garage sales first. Read *The Scratch Kitchen™—The Primer* for saving/buying strategies to grow your collection smartly.

Card 1 – The Absolute Essentials (Total ≈ \$30–40)

| Item | Why You Need It | Quality Points | Budget Tip |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|--|---|
| 3-quart pot with lid | Boils pasta, rice, beans, soups | 1. Heavy bottom for even heat 2. Tight-fitting lid 3. Stainless or enamel (no thin aluminum) | Thrift stores often \$3–8 |
| 10-inch skillet/frying pan | Sautés, fries, one-pan meals | 1. Heavy base (no warping) 2. Oven-safe handle 3. Cast iron or thick stainless best | Cast iron jackpot = lifetime pan |
| Chef's knife (8-inch) | Chops everything fast and safely | 1. Full tang (metal goes all the way through handle) 2. Comfortable grip 3. No wobbles | Test sharpness carefully; sharpen soon for safety |
| Cutting board | Protects counters and knife | 1. Large enough for big veggies 2. Plastic or wood (easy clean) 3. No deep grooves | Plastic is beginner-friendly |
| "Mic" (wooden spoon) | Stirring without scratching | 1. Long handle (keeps hands safe) 2. Smooth, no splinters 3. Hardwood lasts forever | Dollar store often has perfect ones |
| Spatula (metal or heat-proof) | Flipping, scraping | 1. Thin edge gets under food 2. Heat-proof to 400°F+ 3. Metal for cast iron | One good one beats a drawer full |

Goal: Get all 6 items for under \$40.

If you find cast iron – celebrate! Season it with oil and heat.

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Card 2 – Nice-to-Have Next Steps (Add when you can – ≈ \$10–20 more)

| Item | Why It Makes Life Easier | Quality Points | Budget Tip |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|--|-------------------------------|
| Vegetable peeler | Fast peeling of carrots, potatoes | 1. Sharp blade (Y-peeler best) 2. Comfortable grip | Metal blade outlasts plastic |
| Box grater | Shreds cheese, veggies, zest | 1. Sharp holes (no dull teeth) 2. Sturdy handle 3. 4 sides | Dollar store often excellent |
| Measuring cup (2-cup) | Accurate baking & sauces | 1. Clear markings that won't fade 2. Pyrex-style (heat-proof) | One good one is all you need |
| Measuring spoons | Precise spices & baking | 1. Includes 1 Tbsp & ½ tsp 2. Metal or thick plastic | Sets are cheap everywhere |
| Whisk | Smooth sauces, eggs, batters | 1. Balloon shape (lots of wires) 2. Sealed handle (no water inside) | Small or medium size |
| Colander/strainer | Drains pasta, rinses beans | 1. Stable base 2. Small holes for rice 3. Handles | Plastic is fine & lightweight |

Goal: Add these once the essentials are covered – still under \$60 total.

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Card 3 – Pro Shopping Tips (Keep this card in your wallet!)

- Thrift stores first – pots, pans, and knives often \$2–5 each
- Dollar Tree / Family Dollar – wooden spoons, spatulas, measuring cups, peelers
- Garage sales / Facebook Marketplace – cast iron and quality knives for pennies
- Cast iron jackpot? Buy it! Clean with salt, season with oil – lasts forever
- Skip (for now): electric gadgets, knife sets, “unitaskers” (garlic press, etc.)
- Safety check: No loose handles, no deep rust, blades not chipped
- Safety first: A dull knife slips more easily – test carefully at the store and sharpen as soon as you can. A quality knife will hold it’s edge for a few months so add and hone with a steel or use a simple pull-through sharpener so as you

Remember: Start with the 6 essentials → cook for weeks → add the rest when you find deals.

Your kitchen is ready when you can boil, sauté, chop, and stir!

The Scratch Kitchen™ – Start small, cook big, have fun!
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