

COOK'S

ILLUSTRATED

EQUIPMENT CORNER

BY GARTH CLINGINGSMITH

EQUIPMENT UPDATE Electric Knives

Since 2000, when we first tested electric knives, some changes have occurred in this product category. Black & Decker no longer makes our favorite electric knife, the Ergo, but the company has replaced it with the EK800 Slice Right (\$24.99). The Hamilton Beach 74250 Easy Slice Electric Knife (\$25.99), which we downgraded in 2000 for an awkward, bulky handle, has been redesigned. And we found a new model from Cuisinart that retails for a whopping \$60, more than twice the

price of the other two. We brought all three knives into the test kitchen. The Black & Decker Slice Right is every bit as good as its predecessor. It executed all tasks perfectly. Hamilton Beach's loop-style handle has been made more comfortable, but now the power button needs to be both pressed and pulled, more like a trigger. The need to apply extra pressure quickly becomes tiring. The handsome Cuisinart comes with two sets of blades: carving and bread. But both blades seem reluctant to bite into food, whether a brisket or a baguette, and the sleek-looking handle feels quite bulky. For half the price and better performance, we will reach for the new Black & Decker Slice Right.

**BLACK & DECKER
EK800 Slice Right**
A worthy replacement for our favorite electric knife.



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DO YOU REALLY NEED THIS? Cake Cutters

What's the best way to split a cake into two even layers? In the test kitchen, we always use a serrated knife, but we uncovered four gadgets designed specifically for this task and decided to try them out. The most unusual is the Frieling Layer Cake Slicer (\$6.99). This tool guides a thin wire around

a cake that is then crossed and pulled through the cake. Think James Bond strangling an unlucky adversary. Wilton's Cake Leveler (\$2.99) relies on a similar wire blade strung between two metal legs. In both cases, we found that dull wire blades left a rough surface and messy "exit wounds" on cakes. Wilton also makes a Large Cake Leveler (\$19.99), which has a 19-inch serrated blade strung between two legs. This product, as well as the 14-inch Magic Line Torting Knife (\$27.99), seemed better suited to a professional bakery. We found it awkward to use such lengthy blades on small 9-inch-round cakes.

Whether you are a cake-splitting novice or pro, we recommend a serrated knife. Oh, and it will also cut bread.

PRODUCT UPDATE Plastic Wrap

Many brands of plastic wrap clutter supermarket aisles these days. Are they all created equal? We bought five to find out.

Stretch-Tite, Saran Premium, Saran Cling Plus, Glad Cling Wrap, and Glad Press'n Seal all survived a microwave test and kept guacamole from turning brown for 72 hours. The real differences came when we tried using these wraps to cover bowls made of glass, metal, and plastic. The Glad Press'n Seal stuck to all three—but only if the bowls were perfectly dry. A glass bowl kept in a refrigerator for a few minutes gathered enough condensation to render the Press'n Seal useless. We consider this a fatal flaw.

The other four wraps performed equally well when used on metal or on glass. Plastic was another story. None of the wraps could cling to the plastic bowl. In every case we had to wind extra wrap around the first sheet. This is where Stretch-Tite, the stickiest of all the tested, really shines. Stretch-Tite is not as readily available as Saran or Glad products, but mail-ordering

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