

Cooking Course

Finding The Right Pan for the Job

(NAPS)—Consumers often see and hear lots of confusing terms when shopping for cookware and bakeware. Here's a look at some common terms and their simple explanations from the Cookware Manufacturers Association (CMA):

- **Clad:** In most cases, clad means that a pan is made of three, five or as many as nine separate pieces of metal that have been fused together. Usually, the inside and outside of the pan are made of stainless steel while the inside layers are made of a magnetic or more conductive material such as copper or aluminum. Sometimes, clad only refers to the bottom of a stainless steel pan, where conductive material has been attached to improve heat transfer.

- **Nonstick coatings:** All nonstick coatings are not the same. Bakeware often has a silicone finish applied to the entire pan. These finishes work fine at oven temperatures and help to release high-sugar-content baked items. Most quality cookware features PTFE organic finishes. These are durable, high-temperature resistant coatings. Sometimes the coatings are reinforced to provide resistance to scratching and can come in one-, two- or three-coat finishes. The more coats and reinforcement, the longer the coating can be expected to last.

- **Oven-safe:** Pans are only completely oven safe if they have metal instead of plastic handles. For non-metallic handles the use and care instructions should tell what the temperature limits of the pan are. When in doubt, don't use cookware inside the oven.

Now that you know what you're cooking with, it's time to pick your pan. The right ingredients combined with the right



When cooking or baking, it's important to use the right kinds of pots and pans.

cooking utensil produce the best results. But too often, according to the CMA, cooks concentrate on ingredients and not the pan.

Here are some quick tips to help assure perfect results from the kitchen:

- **Understand materials and how they react to heat:** Thin pans, and those made of aluminum, will heat more quickly than thicker pans and those made of stainless steel. For most cooking, particularly with nonstick surfaces, a setting no higher than medium works best.

- **Foods determine the pan:** Sauces and stews belong in more cylindrical pots where the element's heat can be cycled throughout the food. Quickly cooked items and those needing sautéing are prepared in skillets or sauté pans.

- **Size the pan to the size of dish being cooked:** Small one- to two- quart sauce pans are perfect for couples. As a family grows, larger four-quart Dutch ovens may be needed for recipes. Food should occupy not more than two-thirds of the pan, leaving room for expansion during cooking.

When shopping for pans, always look for the CMA Seal to be sure you're purchasing optimally designed and manufactured cookware.