Why You Need Kitchen Knives For Survival (+How To Choose One)

In a time of social crisis, food shortages and other problems will contribute to a breakdown of law and order.

While guns are very important for self defense and hunting, they are useless when it comes to taking game and preparing it for use as food, clothing, and other needs. No matter whether you need to field dress a fresh kill, clean a fish, or prepare a hide for tanning, cooking knives are absolutely essential.

Choosing a cooking knife that can be used for multiple tasks can be very important, especially if you can only carry one knife in your every day carry bag or have limited room in your bug out bag. Depending on the knife that you choose, it may also have some capacity to be used as a self defense weapon.

Bear in mind, however, that you must also know how to use the specific blade and point to your advantage and understand how they differ from defensive and utility knives.

Survival Knives vs. Kitchen Knives

Survival knives are designed and intended to be used outside for survival situations. They can be heavy or light depending on how they are designed and the specific function they are meant for. The average blade length of a survival knife is between 4 and 8 inches, and may have a straight, serrated, or combined serrated straight edge. Small knives can be used for cutting kindling and other cutting needs while larger blades (over 12 inches) can be used for chopping. When you look at the blade design, you should be able to determine whether it will be good for skinning animals, cutting paths through

underbrush, or other purposes.

As there are many different blade designs, there are also a number of different handles and materials. The most common materials include steel, hard rubber, wood, and bone. Some handles are thin to help reduce the weight. Others are hollow, which makes for a handle with a more comfortable fit for big hands. The hollowed out area can also be used for storing away small tools or even some small fishing gear needs. Unfortunately, these handles can be fragile, so they will not hold up well for chopping, or other hard impact jobs.

The main purpose of kitchen knives is to prepare food. They aren't designed to be survival knives. There are three basic types of knife edges: straight, serrated, and granton. Straight edges are best for cuts that require heavy pressure and clean cuts while serrated knives are better for slicing action as opposed to the use of pressure. The granton knife features grooves on the knife edges for making even cuts of meat. While some kitchen knives can be used in an emergency for self defense, don't expect them to hold up well under this, or other kinds of non-cooking related use. Remember, survival knives are built to be tools, while cooking knives are meant to be utensils. Survival knives need to remain durable when being used on everything from cord and green wood to metal coverings. They can be used to pry things open as easily as they can be used to saw through cordage.

Usually, you can do a lot more with a dedicated survival knife than a cooking knife. While cooking knives are more fragile and more inclined to break, and dull faster, they do have a place in your bug out bag. They are very important for

butchering meat and preparing a wide range of foods as safely as possible. While you may want a “one knife does all” for your bug out bag, remember that there are many things you may need to use a survival knife on that should never come into contact with food. For example, having to poke through sludge or chemical debris may be something you have to do with a survival knife. While folding survival knives can be used for this kind of job, there may not be a good way to properly clean the folding mechanism and inside the handle so that the knife can be used for food preparation without risk of pathogen or chemical contamination.

This is just one reason why cooking knives should be part of your bug out gear. Now lets have a closer look at cooking knives the roles they can play in a situation where you need to use them outside of a routine household setting.

Types Of Blade Material Used on Kitchen Knives

When choosing a survival cooking knife, it is also very important to know what kind of metal the blade is from. This will give you some ideas about whether or not it can be easily resharpened as well as how durable it will be under difficult conditions.

- Stainless Steel – Usually made from 420 stainless steel, or the steel most commonly used in flatware. This steel usually has high amounts of chromium stainless steel alloy, which is softer than carbon steel. On the good side, knives made from these materials are easier to sharpen, and will also resist rust and corrosion better. Unfortunately, these blades also don’t hold their edge as well and will need to be sharpened more often. If you try to refashion 420 stainless steel into a larger blade, rest assured it will not be as durable under rigorous use.

- Carbon Steel – Carbon steel is an alloy of iron and carbon. Since both elements are cheaper and more plentiful, knives made of this material will tend to cost less. Other advantages include the knives will be easier to sharpen, and, as previously noted, will hold their edges well. Unfortunately, you must be careful with these knives because they can easily become rusted and corroded. You will need to be careful about keeping the blades clean, dry, and well lubricated.
- High Carbon Stainless Steel – Knives made from this alloy have more carbon compared to other stainless steel alloys. These knives are better in terms of their capacity to maintain a sharp edge. They will also be less likely to develop stains and discoloration.
- Ceramic Knives – Ceramic knives are made from zirconium dioxide. Because this material is very hard, knives made from this material keep their edges for a very long time. These knives are also much lighter in weight than stainless steel knives, and do not corrode. On the downside, these knives are also very brittle. As a result, you can only cut relatively soft fruits and vegetables or boneless meat. They will work well in a conventional kitchen, but not in a field situation where you have only one knife for preparing game meat. In addition, to sharpen these knives you must use special techniques that differ from the ones you would use for carbon blades.
- Titanium – The titanium blade is lighter, more wear resistant, and it no more difficult than steel to sharpen. On the downside, titanium is much more flexible than steel, and is also very expensive. It is not well suited for cutlery, and most certainly won’t do well as a survival cooking knife.
- Laminated – Laminated steel blades are made of layers of different types of steel. Typically, steels that are less brittle, but do not hold their edges well are kept in the middle layers, while the harder steels are used

for the outer surfaces. Even though the layers of steel will bond to each other, these blades are still more prone to chipping and other types of damage. These knives are also harder to grind and sharpen because excessive grinding can take away too much of the outer layer and leave the softer interior exposed. It is also possible to grind these blades down in such a way that thinned outer surfaces will chip off with relatively little effort. They can be used for survival cooking, however they may not last very long.

- Plastic – Plastic, non-polymer blades are usually not sharp or durable. They do not make good survival knives let alone good defensive knives. Even if you do manage to sharpen one for defensive needs, it is not likely to work more than once.

How Steel Blades Are Manufactured

The processes used to convert raw metal or other materials into a functional knife is also very important when assessing a cooking knife. Here are the basic processes and how they impact the durability and capacity of the knife.

- Forged – Hand Forged blades are made by highly skilled professionals using a multi-step process. A piece of steel alloy is heated to a high temperature and then pounded while red hot into the basic knife blade form. When the basic shape is created, the blade is quenched in oil and then tempered to the desired hardness. After forging and heat treating, the blade is polished and

sharpened. Forged blades are usually thicker and heavier than machine stamped blades. If the metal and working are done correctly, forged blades will be stronger and more durable. Bear in mind, however, quality can vary considerably from knife to knife.

- Stamped – Stamped blades are usually cut to shape directly from cold rolled steel. Next, they are heat treated for strengthening, and then ground, polished, and sharpened. Since most of this is a machine based process, the blades are fairly consistent from one to the next in terms of durability and quality. Today, most cooking knives are made using this process. While they are also more common, and therefore cheaper, do not forget that they may not last as long as a forged blade. If you are looking for a survival tool that will last for decades or longer, it may be in your best interest to research forged blade artisans carefully and see if you can fit a good quality knife into your budget.

Kitchen Knife Handles

As noted earlier, kitchen knives usually have blades that cannot be folded into the handle. In order for a fixed blade knife to work well and last a long time, the handle must also be of suitable material and construction quality. Here are some basic materials and their characteristics in relation to their usefulness as survival cooking knives:

- Wood Handles – Although wooden handles offer a good grip and are considered the most attractive and easiest to style, they also come with some drawbacks. First, these handles can be difficult to care for because they must be cleaned carefully and coated with mineral oil to prevent cracking and splitting. Even though you can wrap leather around a wooden knife handle, it can still split, crack, or warp. If the knife handle only has varnish as a finishing coat, the handle will not resist

water well at all, and will eventually crack and warp. If you do purchase a knife with a wooden handle, pay careful attention to the coating. Always wash the knife by hand, and dry it quickly to avoid problems with water getting into the wood.

- Composite Handles – Composite handles are made from laminate wood that has been impregnated with plastic resin. The resin makes the wood easy to care for and more resistant to pathogens. Many chefs prefer composite handles for this reason and also because the grip is as comfortable as a wooden handle. Composite handles are also very durable and will withstand just about any cutting task.
- Stainless Steel Handles – Stainless steel handles are the best in terms of resisting the growth of disease bearing organisms and also in terms of durability. In my opinion, knives with stainless steel handles will be the best for survival cooking because you can use them in a wide range of situations. You can wash them frequently without concern for damaging the handles. This is especially important for safely dressing and butchering wild game. One downside is stainless steel knife handles can be a bit slippery in the hand. Just make sure you dry the handles thoroughly before use, and make sure your hands remain dry while using them. Some manufacturers also place ridges, bumps, or indentations on these handles to help provide a better grip. The other problem with all metal handles is they weight a lot more than other materials. Depending on how the knife is shaped, and the blade materials, a stainless steel handle can easily disrupt the balance of the knife. You may also find the added weight increases the risk of wrist and hand fatigue. To reduce weight and balance related problems, some knife manufacturers are putting hollow handled stainless steel handles on knives. You will still need to test each knife for yourself to see if it works well for you.

- Plastic Handles – Plastic handles are safer than wooden handles because they do not absorb microorganisms. They are also much easier to care for and will not rot or split. Since they are also much lighter than other handle types, you may or may not find them more comfortable to use. As with stainless steel handles, the weight of a plastic handle can also disrupt the balance of the knife if it isn't comCooking Knife Types and Their Use as Survival Knives

Earlier in the article, I mentioned that a 12" butcher knife is a good tool to keep around for emergency self defense. When it comes to your bug out bag, however, you may feel that this sized knife is simply too large. Here are some other options that you may want to consider. Remember, even though a smaller knife may seem appealing because it is easy to carry, you will have to work a lot harder with that knife when it comes to butchering a deer or preparing a hide. That being said, if at all possible, I do recommend keeping at least one of these knives in your stockpile and in your survival gear.

- Peeling Knife – This knife has a strong curved blade and tip that is excellent for peeling all types of fruits and vegetables. The total blade length is usually about 2" long. This knife won't be of much use when dressing game, however it will work well for trimming bark of trees and off other natural materials. That being said, a good quality pocket knife can be used for the same purpose.
- Paring Knife – This is a good everyday kitchen utility knife with a 3-4" thin, sharp, and firm pointed tip. It makes short work of peeling and cutting up of potatoes, fruits, and other vegetables. As with peeling knives, this knife is useful for preparing certain kinds of food, but will not work well as a "one knife for all purposes" in the kitchen. Insofar as your stockpile, it is a good knife for making thin slices that will stretch

out a meal and for other thin cutting.

- Vegetable Knife – This knife has a strong straight edge and a strong tip that makes it an excellent choice for cutting up smaller fruits and vegetables. In a situation where you have no other knife, this one can be attached to a wooden shaft and used to spear fish. It is not sturdy enough for any other kind of hunting.
- Chef Knife – This knife has a blade length between 6 and 12 inches. It can be used for chopping or slicing meat as well as fruits and vegetables. Chef's knives can also be used for chopping bone instead of using a cleaver makes. Overall, this knife is one of the better ones for inclusion in your bug out gear as it is both versatile and sturdy. It can also be used for self defense as long as you know how to make the most of the blade shape as opposed to trying to stab with the tip.
- Bread knife – This knife has a 6-10 inch long, strong, and serrated blade that is used to cut bread without crushing it. This knife can be used for slicing soft foods like tomatoes, squash, and other soft fruits. A bread knife closer to 6 inches can also be used for cutting through tough meat, however you will find that a larger knife will be more cumbersome. Be prepared to work harder when using this knife to cut through meat, however the trade off in no need for sharpening the blade makes it a good choice for a survival cooking knife.
- Cleaver – This is a large, sharp, and heavy rectangular sturdy knife used for splitting large cuts of meat and ribs. A cleaver has a 10-14 inch blade and a long handle that helps to generate the needed power to do it's job. The cleaver is designed to cut with a single strong stroke without cracking, splintering, or bending the blade. A cleaver is indispensable insofar as survival cooking knives. It can be used to dress game as well as take you through most parts of the butchering process even with large game such as bear. Cleavers also make

good defensive weapons that can be used with relatively little training.

- Steak Knife – Some people classify the steak knife as a kitchen knife, however it is actually a dinner knife as opposed to one dedicated to food preparation. These knives come in smooth and serrated edge designs. You can use a steak knife to cut raw meat into thin slices, however there are other knives that will work better. As with a bread knife, you can use a serrated steak knife to saw your way through just about any kind of meat, however it will take some work. The sharp edge on a steak knife combined with the 6 – 8 inch blade makes it a somewhat feasible knife to use for up close and personal self defense. While the blade on these knives is slim and durable, do not forget to carefully assess both the metal used for the blade and the handle strength. Dinner knives are often made of less durable metal than food preparation knives, so you may have a harder time finding one that will be as strong or durable as a comparably sized serrated bread knife.
- Boning Knife – This knife is designed to remove meat from the bone. It has a thin, curved blade and a strong straight edge that make it easy to maneuver into small or tight places on a carcass. Stiff boning knives wor
- k well on venison like meat while flexible versions will work better on fish and poultry. Insofar as versatility, a boning knife is usually only best for what it was intended. It is not a knife that will work well for defensive situations, trimming bark off trees, or other survival needs. That being said, without it, you are likely to wind up wasting a lot of meat on larger game animals unless you are staying in place for some time and don’t mind boiling the animal bones to make soup in a hurry.
- Fillet Knife – This is a long, strong, flexible, and slim bladed knife that allows easy movements while filleting and preparing fish. The blade length is

usually 6-11 inches long allowing the knife to move easily along the backbone and under the fish's skin. A fillet knife is not designed to cut through tougher meat or other objects. As with the boning knife, is a necessary food preparation knife that isn't well suited for secondary purposes. Without this knife, however, it will be much more difficult to process fish for consumption.

- Utility Knife – A cooking utility knife is a very versatile knife that usually has a blade between 4 and 7 inches long. No matter whether you are cutting meat, fruits, or vegetables, it can be readily used for chopping, slicing, and dicing. If you have to narrow your selection down from this list for your bug out bag, a kitchen utility knife should be in the top three.
- Butcher Knife – If you are looking for a knife that will cut through just about anything and remain in good condition, a butcher knife should be at the top of your survival cooking knife list. These knives feature large, thick, curved blades that aren't so different from Bowie knives. They work well for splitting, striping, and cutting meat. They are also used in combination with a bone saw and boning knife to break down a carcass into primary cuts; and then from primary cuts down to packaging size. The longer blade on a butcher knife makes it useful for making even and level cuts on meat while the curved blade easily gets into joints where it can easily sever connective tissue. Both the blade design and the tip make it a useful self defense weapon that can be used to slice at an attacker.

- pensated for somehow in the blade design or materials used. Unfortunately, plastic handles can be very sensitive to UV light damage, and may crack or become brittle over time. While you may be able to compensate for that by wrapping the handle in leather, the lack of durability is still a problem, especially if the knife

tang is constructed in a way that doesn't allow for the fitting of a new handle. It is also important to note that plastic handles are also very slippery when wet. Depending on how the handle is designed, your hands may slip so much that you will wind up getting cut by the knife blade.

Some Other Knives to Consider

While you should try to fit as many of the knives listed above into your bug out bag and hunting gear, there are also some other knives that may be useful in certain situations. Depending on the areas that you are traveling through, one or more of these knives may be of more use than expected.

- Tomato Knife – A tomato knife has a small serrated blade and two prongs on the tip. It is perfect for slicing tomatoes and then picking up the sliced tips. It might also be of use to you if you must fish or relatively delicate meat into thin strips and then arrange them without having to handle each piece. Beyond that, it has no other purpose insofar as survival cooking and

prepping.

- Carving Knife – this is a larger knife with a blade measuring between 8 and 15 inches long. It is used mostly to cut slices of meat, poultry, roast, and other large cooked meats. The edge of the blade can be either smooth or serrated. A carving knife is considerably thinner than a chef's knife, so it can make thinner and more precise slices. If you are looking to stretch a meal, or must feed more people with a smaller amount of meat, this knife will make it easier to create smaller portions. These knives are strong enough to be used for self defense and some survival needs, however, they won't last long under this kind of activity. A carving knife also won't work well as a butchering knife and should not be used for those purposes. Ideally, you should keep one set of knives aside for butchering and preparing game, and another set for cooking. This helps reduce the risk of carrying pathogens from meat you decide to discard into the cooking area.
- Oyster Knife – The oyster knife is designed to pry open oysters and separate their meat from the shell (commonly known as shucking). In order to shuck an oyster, the blade needs to be short and thick with a thick handle. A good quality oyster knife will also have a thick shield or hand guard to prevent your hand from slipping forward and getting cut on the oyster shells while you complete the shucking process. If you are going to travel through an area where oyster beds are plentiful, this knife will be absolutely necessary. Of all the optional cooking knives to bring along, this one is small, compact, and may be your best option for creating a diverse collection. As tough as these knives are, however, they won't be useful for much other than shucking oysters.
- Slicing Knives – While a slicing knife has a function similar to a carving knife, it tends to be narrower and longer. Depending on the design, you can choose serrated or smooth edge blades as well as ones that have either a

blunt tip or a rounded tips. Round tips are better for meat separation. Slicing knives will work better on ham, fish, barbecued beef and pork, and venison. Insofar as versatility, they are also somewhat limited. You would be better off choosing a carving knife if you want something a bit more durable.

- Vegetable Peeler – even though this isn't necessarily a knife in the conventional sense, it is something you might want to bring along with you. The slotted metal blade is useful for cutting through all kinds of vegetable skins and making vegetable or fruit flesh peels. Once again, if you need to stretch fruits and vegetables to feed more people, this peeler may help you create the impression that more food is available. It will also remove less useful material from the fruit or vegetables than a paring knife and requires less skill to use.
- Mincing Knife – The mincing knife is also known as a Half Moon knife because of it's curved shape. The semi-circular curved blade and handle position allow the blade to be rocked back and forth easily on a hard surface. It can be used for mincing or chopping fruits, vegetables, and meat. You may also be able to find mincing knives with two blades parallel to each other. This is mostly a specialty knife that will not work well as versatile cutting tool. It is distinctly different from a sickle, which has a thicker blade and is made for slicing and cutting.

Important Accessories

Regardless of the knife type, there are some simple tools or accessories that you will need in order to use them properly or keep them in working form for as long as possible. Here are some things you should consider keeping in your bug out bag at all times:

- Honing Steel – This is a rod 12 inches long and about ½ inch thick made of steel or ceramic. It is not used to sharpen the blade. Rather, it is used to straighten the blade after using a sharpener. No matter how careful you are when sharpening a blade, some disfiguration of the cutting surface will occur. Using honing steel afterward will make the cutting surface more even and thus reduce excessive wear on the knife when you are using it.
- Cut Resistant Gloves – These gloves are typically made of Kevlar or metal mesh. You should wear these gloves on the hand opposite the one you are using to control the knife. When you are cutting game or other slippery materials, accidents are bound to happen. Cut resistant gloves will prevent injury and also go a long way towards reducing your risk of getting infections from uncooked foods.
- Cutting Board – as strange as it may sound, keeping a cutting board with you can be very useful. The softer plastic or wood of a cutting board will be less damaging to a knife blade than trying to cut on a rock or some other hard surface found in nature. Even if the cutting board only lasts for a few years, it will be useful while you find the time and materials to make another one.
- Carrying Case – fixed blade knives can still cut into other items in your bug out bag or cut your hand if you come into contact with the blade. A carrying case is very important for prevent injuries as well as ensuring that the blade is no damaged by encounters other items in your bug out bag.

How to Care For Kitchen Knives

Knowing how to properly care for and maintain kitchen knives is the best way to ensure they last as long as possible and remain functional and safe to use during their lifespan. A dull knife is extremely dangerous because it can slip easily.

If you are not careful, you could end up getting a bad cut or other serious injuries that could send you to the emergency room. Here are the basic things you need to do in order to keep your knives clean and ready to use at all times.

Cleaning – Always keep your knife free of debris during use. Rinse the entire knife frequently with hot water and wipe it dry after each cleaning. This will help to keep food particles from sticking to the knife and also help reduce the risk of working with a slippery handle. Keeping the knife wiped down properly will also help reduce the risk of having particles from one food type making their way into another food. Aside from flavor related concerns, this is also a vital part of controlling the spread of disease from one food to another, especially when some of the foods aren't going to be cooked, or cooked to the temperature required for other foods being cut with the knife.

Always use hot water and a mild soap to wash your kitchen knives. If food sticks to the knife, let it soak in hot water for a few minutes before attempting to wash it. Always keep the water clear and shallow so that you can see the knife clearly in the wash pan. Kitchen knives should never be washed in the dishwasher. The dish washing detergents used in a dishwasher can be quite strong and may dull the knife or even stain it.

Washing Kitchen Knives Safely

- When washing your knives never just through the knives

into a dishpan full of hot soapy water. They must be washed individually cleanly, correctly, and safely. If the knives are just thrown into the dishpan, you may not see them or think they are in another part of the pan. This can lead to getting cut when your hand or fingers encounter the blade instead of the handle.

- Always hold a knife with the blade pointed away from you.
- Always keep your mind on what you are doing when cleaning knives and never let yourself become distracted.
- When washing a knife, always use a dishcloth to wipe the blade down gently from the top (dull or thicker side of the blade) to the sharp edge. This prevents the sharp blade from coming into contact with your skin.
- Always hold the handle when rinsing the knife, and use hot running water.
- Always dry your knives after washing. Dry the knife blade from the dull side to the sharp side to prevent accidental cuts.
- When you are finished washing your kitchen knives they should be put away in a safe place such as a knife block or a travel case used just for this purpose.

Sharpening

Most cooking knives only need sharpening once or twice a year. If they cannot slice through a sheet of typing paper, it is time to sharpen them. Depending on your experience level with sharpening knives and the cost of the knives, it may be worth your while to have them sharpened by a professional. When all else fails, however, you can and should know how to use a set of whetstones to achieve this goal. A good quality set may be expensive, however it will be worth the cost to obtain a set that will keep all your knives in good condition.

Basics of Sharpening Stainless Steel Knives

- Start off by placing the whetstone on a wooden cutting board with the coarse side up.
- Hold the knife by the handle and keep the blade at a 20 degree angle from the stone. Place the tip of the knife against the stone. Use your other hand to stabilize the blade while you are working.
- Using moderate pressure, slide the blade forward. Make sure the blade stays at the same angle to the whetstone so that there is an even abrasion against the blade.
- Repeat 10 times, then turn the knife over and do the other side the same way.
- Once you are done using the coarse whetstone, repeat the same process using the fine grit stone.
- Do not forget to hone the blade with honing steel.
- Complete the process by rinsing the blade with very hot water and dry with a soft cloth. If the handle needs oiling or other care, you can do that before storing the knife away.

Honing Your Kitchen Knives

Honing is a way to help keep knife blades sharp without actually sharpening them. It can also help return the cutting edge closer to its original design. Honing steel will remove any residual nicks and spurs. In addition, if your sharpening efforts produced an uneven edge or the wrong angle, honing can help restore the correct angle.

Basic steps for honing a kitchen knife:

- If you are right handed, start off by holding the steel by the handle in your left hand. If you are left handed, then hold the honing steel in your right hand. Always keep the point of the honing steel facing away from your

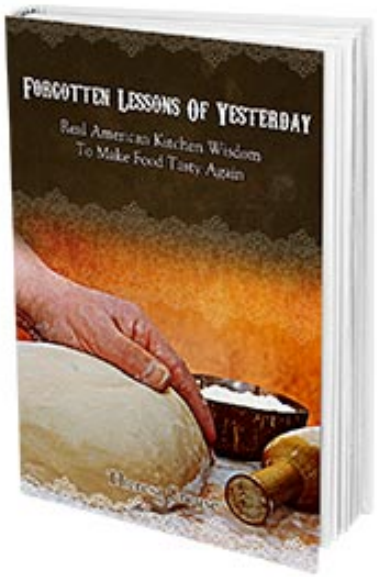
face and body. You should be facing your work counter or working surface and hold the honing steel about 3-4 inches above this area.

- Place the end of the knife that is closest to the handle (known as the heel) against the steel rod with the blade pointing out at about a 20 degree angle.
- Slowly push the knife down, maintaining the angle, and pushing smoothly from the heel to the tip so that the edge is against the steel all the way down.
- Repeat the step about 4- 6 times on each side of the blade. Use the paper cutting test to see if the blade is sharp and producing an even cut. If it still not cutting properly, you can try the honing process again.
- After honing the blade, rinse the blade with very hot water, dry with a soft cloth, and store the knife away if you aren't going to use it immediately.

During a time of extreme need, it is very important to be able to prepare food safely.

This includes game, fish, and other foods that you gather during the crisis period. Cooking knives are very important because they will help you prepare the foods as safely and efficiently as possible. While some cooking knives can be used in a pinch for self defense and other needs, they should be reserved for food preparation and cooking only. Ideally, you should carry at least two or three of the most important cooking knives, and then dedicate the rest of your bug out knife inventory to either tactical or survival knives.

Regardless of how many knives you carry, it is important to choose good quality knives as well as accessories such as sharpening stones and suitable carrying cases. And apply to cook some recipes from Forgotten Lessons of Yesterday.



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