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Trendspotting: Minimalist Cooking & Inspirations

Minimalism, downsizing, unitasking, going slow: Today's most provocative trend may be the return to simplicity and minimalist cooking. Here, a look at all the low- and high-tech ways people are transforming chaos into calm.

By Kristin Donnelly, Bob Morris

Minimalist Cooking: Kitchen Tools

COFFEE MAKING



Courtesy of Melitta USA, Inc.

MANUAL

Manual Drip Coffee Many coffee purists believe manual drip coffee tastes best. Melitta enhanced the design of the classic cone, adding a gap at the bottom so you can see when the cup is full. \$6. melitta.com



Courtesy of Boyds.com

MECHANICAL

Precision Drip Coffee Coffee geeks are sticklers about water temperature when brewing. The Technivorm Moccamaster uses a copper element to maintain the ideal heat. \$280. williams-sonoma.com

HERB PREPPING



© Kate Mathis

MANUAL

Mortar & Pestle The inside of the Jamie Oliver granite mortar and pestle is unpolished and rough, making it easier to crush herbs for pesto or spices for curries. \$24. amazon.com



© Kate Mathis

MECHANICAL

Food Processor The Ninja Master Prep Pro has multiple blades working at once to help make pesto in seconds and crush ice until perfectly fluffy for drinks. \$60. target.com

RICE COOKING

MANUAL

Clay Rice Pot Tradition-minded Japanese cooks make rice in earthenware pots known as *donabes*. The gorgeous "Kamado-san" *donabe* is extra thick, to help retain heat and cook gently. \$155. toirakitchen.com

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Minimalist cooking and eating. Cabbage and brussels sprouts have very little pesticide residue. Photo © Kate Mathis.

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MECHANICAL

Programmable Rice Cooker Zojirushi's new "Umami" rice cooker, which will be released in mid-February, uses induction and fuzzy-logic technology to cook different kinds of rice, including sushi and brown. It also doubles as a slow cooker. From \$273; zojirushi.com.



Kitchen Equipment and Ingredient Staples for the Minimalist Cook

Minimalist Cooking: A Maximalist Martini



Martini Recipes

Writer Bob Morris tells why he doctors his pristine martinis with caper juice, ginger, even chile powder.

No cocktail is taken more seriously by purists than the martini. Learning to prepare one properly at the onset of middle age brought a kind of dignified simplicity to my cocktail hours, and clarity to the chilled glass I would lift to my lips each evening. Purity prevailed for a while in my minimalist, modernist home.

But then a funny and liberating thing happened. I realized that I preferred (horrors) vodka in my martinis to the classic but medicinal gin. And although I never considered making Cosmopolitans (cocktails should come from literary figures, not TV characters), my first dirty martini was a revelation. With all the olive juice and olives, it was a salad in a glass. And when I added a splash of tomato juice and a squeeze of lemon, it became a gazpacho that helped justify skipping vegetables at dinner.

From there, caper juice and chile pepper got added to the shaker, or even chile powder from a bottle. Other times, I found myself grating ginger into grapefruit juice, then adding a drop or two (or seven) of pomegranate syrup. Add ice and vodka, shake, and pour out something between a spiked Snapple and a Slurpee.

You can see where this has gone. Once a Manhattan purist (bourbon, sweet vermouth, bitters, cherry), I now add a splash of apple cider when it's in season. Clarity and simplicity have given way to gleeful, mad-scientist invention.

But then the martini, like American coffee, has been going this way for years anyway, with everything from chocolate to bacon thrown into the shaker. Well, as it is with minimalist homes that become more likable and livable as they become more cluttered and cozy, so it is with minimalist cocktails. For me, the martini has been a slippery, spicy, savory slope. Especially when I'm on my third one before dinner.

Bob Morris is a columnist for the *New York Observer* and the author of *Assisted Loving*.

Minimalist Inspirations: Travel Helpers



These tiny travel companies do all the planning to create excellent food-focused trips.

TRAVEL BY DESIGN

Tammy Zacks organizes sporty trips that could include yoga in Patagonia (left), as well as tours led by chefs. This spring, *Top Chef* contestant Kevin Gillespie will guide people through his favorite places in Austria. travelbydesigninc.com.

Courtesy of Travel by Design

EXTRAORDINARY JOURNEYS

A mother-and-daughter team coordinates bespoke trips in Africa, focusing on intimate experiences—foraging through Botswana's Kalahari Desert with local Bushmen, say, then sleeping in a luxe tent under acacia trees. extraordinaryjourneys.net.

TRUFFLEPIG

Whether you want to take a cooking class in Vietnam's Hoi An or eat at a seaside restaurant in Zaton Mali, Croatia, this Toronto-based planner organizes custom trips around the world and coordinates all the minutiae. trufflepig.com.

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Minimalist Inspirations: Books



Courtesy of W.W. Norton & Company

GROWING A FARMER

Half memoir, half farm guide, Kurt Timmermeister's book (left) is perfect for anyone with agrarian fantasies. The Seattle chef-turned-farmer details everything from making cheese to slaughtering chickens.

THE 100 THING CHALLENGE

For his blog, Dave Bruno spent a year living with only 100 items. In his book, he urges others to pare back, too. "It's quite possible that once you're done, you will find yourself content without that much stuff."

THE PIONEER WOMAN

In her new memoir, blog sensation Ree Drummond of thepioneerwoman.com describes how a **steak** cooked in butter convinced her to leave Los Angeles and live on a ranch with a cowboy (who is now her husband).

Minimalist Inspirations: Slow Travel



ONE STEP AT A TIME

Country Walkers is all about slow travel; the company leads tours all over the world. New this year are weeklong hikes through Iceland's national parks and the Galápagos Islands. countrywalkers.com.