



# Understanding Kitchen Product Materials

Given the wide array of materials used in the construction of kitchen products today, many consumers are concerned about products they use in their home kitchens. This fact sheet will help address some of the common material choices available, as well as give tips regarding what to look for, design and construction wise, when purchasing cookware and other kitchen equipment for your family.

## Material Choices

Stainless steel, aluminum, wood, and plastic are all materials used by the manufacturers of food equipment today. However, not all types or grades of a material are compatible for the type of food they contact and for your desired end use.

### Wood

The use of hardwoods such as maple and oak are generally considered acceptable for use as either a cutting board or top of a baker's table, but wood should not be used for everyday kitchen utensils.

### Metals

Certain grades of stainless steel and aluminum can both be used to produce cookware and other related items. Since the grade is not usually indicated on the product label, consider checking to see if the product is certified to NSF/ANSI sanitation standards before purchasing.

Unprotected copper should generally not be used to store or mix foods and beverages, nor should materials containing lead be used, as these metals could contaminate food.

### Nonstick Coatings

Always be sure to read the manufacturer's instructions and warranty information for any temperature

restrictions or the types of kitchen utensils that can be used in contact with nonstick surfaces. Any visible cracking, chipping, or peeling should be your indicator to stop using these products.

### Plastics

While melamine and other plastics should not be mixed into food or directly ingested, they have been safely used for many years in the manufacture of cups, plates, trays and food storage containers.

## Check the Label for NSF Certification

Many residential kitchen products carry independent certification today. Certification helps families have confidence that the products they are using meet voluntary national public health standards for design, material selection, cleanability and performance.

## Proper Cleaning & Product Usage

Whatever the product, always follow the manufacturer's use instructions, since certain materials might not be suitable for contact with all food types. In addition, not all materials may be safe for exposure to heat, dishwasher safe or intended for use in a microwave.

In addition, some materials may require the use of special cleaning procedures or products to ensure bacteria and dirt are effectively removed. Be sure to follow the manufacturer's instructions for cleaning and sanitizing all of your kitchen products between uses.

For additional food safety tips, contact the NSF Consumer Affairs Office at [info@nsf.org](mailto:info@nsf.org) or download our complete [Food Safety fact kit](#).

*NSF International is an independent, not-for-profit public health organization that certifies products and writes standards for food, water and consumer goods.*