

Butcher Knives and Essential Processing Tools

There are many distinct types of knives available specifically for commercial processors. Boning knives are butchering tools with a tapered point and a thin blade. It is the go-to knife for butchers and processors looking to separate the meat from the bones of poultry, meat, and fish. They are normally 5 to 6.5 inches long. Boning knives occasionally are made longer but typically stay under 7 inches. Its universal feature is a thin, narrow blade. Boning knives are never as thick as other butcher's knives since the task of deboning requires a thin blade with the ability to trace the path of the bone. Stiffer boning knives are typically reserved for large carcasses, with ultra-thin boning knives preferred for poultry or fish. The ultra-flexible knives are sometimes referred to as fillet knives.

Straight or Curved Blade?

Some processors prefer straight boning knives, but curved blades are the go-to favorites of the modern butcher. The curved boning knife is also the best knife to trim the fat and make slicing cuts. A curved boning knife allows you to make cuts with more speed and accuracy. The knife can trace the path of the bone easier. Curved knives are also better for cuts, such as the reverse grip, when starting something like boning out the shoulder. It's also useful for trimming fat, with the cutting blade able to line up more evenly with the path of the cut. This allows for a smoother path through the meat when cutting. With a very sharp knife, the difference is noticeable. There is almost no resistance with a sharp, curved knife, which increases speed and efficiency. The resulting cuts reduce fatigue and make the process much more enjoyable. Boning knives are made from a few types of steel, but the most common are stainless or carbon steel and their alloys. Different steels require different sharpening methods and frequencies.

Getting a Handle on Things

While the sharpness of a knife is the most considered factor, professional butchers don't ignore the details of the handle either. Victorinox is the favorite of most professionals, with the hands-down best price-to-quality ratio in the business. They offer boning knives in Fibrox, rosewood, and several synthetic handle materials:

A staple part of butchering supplies/equipment, Fibrox handles are Victorinox's NSF-approved material that is moisture resistant, inhibiting bacterial growth. Fibrox meat cutting knives are also available in all of the colors recognized by HAACP for use with meat (red), fish (blue), produce (green), dairy/flour (white), and poultry (yellow).

A Victorinox boning knife is the best knife at the best price point that is available to both pros and home butchers alike. With an easy-to-maintain blade paired with its Fibrox handle, it's the most common professional boning knife. The smooth lines of the knife offer the ability to trace

cuts easily along bones. In addition, the carbon alloy stainless holds an excellent edge and is very easy to clean.

The Victorinox rosewood handle boning knife is an excellent piece of butcher gear for someone looking for a more traditional tool. That said, just because a tool has a traditional look doesn't mean they aren't ideal for the job. Victorinox rosewood handle knives have the same professional quality steel, and the handle has the perfect grip for tackling a long, large project. Almost every professional prefers to use this knife outside the government-inspected worksite. This is the most comfortable, easy-to-use boning knife for anyone processing outside of a government-inspected facility. Professionals recommend it more often than any other blade.

If you want to go with a different brand, the other synthetic knives are Poly Oxy Methylene (POM), Polypropylene, or nylon. These NSF-compliant tools are moisture-resistant and prevent bacterial growth. A POM-handled knife has a modern aesthetic, like a hard black plastic typically held together with silver rivets. All three of the above are textured with non-slip handles for safety and compliance.

More on Blade Material

To touch on blade materials again, as remarked earlier, there are a couple of main blade types. Stainless blades are easy to clean and resist rust while holding a great edge, but they need more sharpening and care than other types of steel. On the other hand, carbon steel can be challenging to sharpen for a novice. It also requires careful cleaning between sessions, but it takes an excellent edge that will last a long, long time. The various alloy knives try to find a happy medium between those two metals. Many people prefer stainless blades as a beef cutting knife purely for ease of use and cleaning. Sharpening more often with a high-grade sharpening steel like a Victorinox Honing Steel or an F Dick packinghouse steel barely interrupts the flow of your work once you become used to using one.

Other Useful Butcher Gear

Rounding out a good boning knife with a cimeter knife, also called a breaking knife, is always a safe bet for a professional or home meat processor. The Ultraline Primeline breaking knife by Giesser is a great German-made breaking knife and is an especially useful tool for anyone butchering/meat processing at home. Most processing facilities use the Victorinox Fibrox Pro 10-Inch Curved Cimeter Knife because the material is easy to maintain and it has a great price point. The Victorinox steel is easy to keep sharp as well.

A good combo set that includes a skinning knife is the F. Dick Ergogrip Meat Processing Butcher Combo. It comes with a boning and skinning knife with a scabbard for both. Particularly high-grade German construction on that set too. You could have that combo, and the Victorinox 10-inch curved breaking knife with Fibrox handle and be able to process an entire animal from start to finish.

The other main meat-cutting processing tools you need are a two-pound cleaver and a bone saw. Only the two-pound cleaver is essential, however. The Henkels 6-inch Cleaver and the Victorinox 40091 are great cleavers and professional butcher supplies that also suit the home processor's needs. Throw in a set of level five cut-resistant PPE gloves to protect you from cuts, and you are ready to tackle any project.