

Trying to determine if you should add a blender to your kitchen arsenal? Looking for ways to use this versatile appliance? Here's an informational guide to blending basics and how to maximize its culinary potential.



Blenders are standard issue in most kitchens, and these countertop tools are for more than just making smoothies. I use this kitchen appliance to make sauces, dips, spreads, soup, beverages, desserts, and even burgers.

Blenders can be intimidating to use with a variety of blade types, settings, sizes and more. In this post, we'll explore how to make the most of your blender so that when you unlock its culinary potential, creating meals becomes more fun and exciting.



## Blender vs. food processor

When liquid items are being broken down like smoothies, pancake batter, hot soups and sauces, salad dressings, ice cream, or [fruit popsicles](#), the blender is my first choice. The gravely-fed unit and super sharp blades create the most smooth and creamy products.

A [food processor](#) breaks down more hearty, chunky, dry, or tough ingredients a little easier due to the size of the blade and wider cup. It's easy to grind meat, chop vegetables or grate cheese. Stay clear of making beverages like smoothies or blended drinks in a food processor.

## How to use a blender

All outfits come with detachable parts. You'll have a cup, blade, lid, lid plug, and a tamper. The base houses the controls and plugs into an electric outlet.

- Solid foods should be cut into small pieces.
- Make sure the lid is securely on before operating.
- Begin processing on the lowest speed setting, then ramp up as needed.
- Don't leave the blender unattended—the lid can fly off.
- Have a towel handy to cover the lid when gradually adding in liquids like oil to a hot puree, as steam and splattering may occur.
- Leave room for expansion—the top third of the jar should be free of any liquid or solids.
- If the mixture stops circulating, remove the lip plug and use the tamper to stir or push down the ingredients.
- If there is an air bubble, stop and use a spatula to stir the ingredients then process again.
- Add liquid gradually if needed to loosen a thick mixture and create a smooth product.
- Take breaks if cup becomes very warm when touched. Turn off the blender, allow to cool if needed, or unplug!
- Don't ever immerse the base in water to avoid the risk of electrical shock. Wipe it down with a damp cloth or smooth sponge instead.

## Load and layer ingredients correctly!

- **Large containers (more than 20 ounces):** Add liquids, dry goods, leafy greens, fruits and vegetables, ice and frozen ingredients last.
- **Small containers (20 ounces or less):** Ice and frozen ingredients, fruits and vegetables, leafy greens, dry goods, and liquids last.



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## Blender uses

- **Sauces, Dip, and Dressings:** Pesto, mayonnaise, hummus, spreads, salsas, vinaigrettes.
- **Frozen Desserts:** Ice cream bases and fruit-based treats.
- **Vegetable Rice:** Low carb sides like [broccoli rice](#).
- **Beverages:** Smoothies, frozen drinks, blended alcohol drinks.
- **Nuts:** Homemade nut butter like almond or peanut.
- **Purees:** Baby food and hot or cold soups.
- **Grinding meat:** Only for less fibrous proteins like shrimp or fish.
- **Grains and Cereals:** Breadcrumbs, cookie crumbs, oat flour, [almond flour](#).
- **Sugar:** Powder sugar made in seconds.
- **Batter:** Pancakes and muffins.

**Things to avoid:** Kneading dough, grinding tough meat like beef, making mashed potatoes, and extracting juice from vegetables or fruit without the proper setting. The more solid something is, the more it will likely overheat the unit and belongs in a food processor or a heavy-duty appliance.



## Cleaning and maintenance

1. Rinse down with warm water.
2. Fill container halfway with warm water and add a few drops of dish soap.
3. Secure the lid with the lid plug on the cup.
4. Start and gradually increase the speed to the highest setting.
5. Run the blender and clean for 30 to 60 seconds.
6. Turn the speed down to low, and then stop.
7. Rinse all parts with hot water, drain and allow to completely dry on a towel or dish rack.
8. If needed, use a cleaning brush to scrub under the blades, making sure not to touch the blade with your fingers!
9. Most blender cups, lids and tamper can be washed in a dishwasher, however, check the user manual.
10. Store the blender unplugged and make sure the blender cup is dry, so the blades don't rust.



## Benefits of using a blender

1. **Speed:** Recipes can be turned into super smooth purees in minutes!
2. **Versatility:** Drinks, savory appetizers, frozen dessert, snacks, sauces, dressing and hot soups can be made in a blender. Companies are also launching accessories to help create foams for beverages and dishes. The newer models have preset programs to take the guesswork out of processing time and parameters.
3. **Health:** Whole vegetables, fruits, nuts and softer meats can be broken down to make nutritious meals for any eating occasion.

## Blender buying guide

When shopping, there are a few key things to look out for:

- **Parts:** A blender jars come with a cup/jar, lid, lid plug, base, and a tamper.
- **Cups/Jar:** Blender jars come in both glass and plastic. The more expensive models generally have glass. They come in various sizes, from 20, 48, 64, or 72 ounces. I have a 64-ounce capacity and find that the most versatile.
- **Blade:** If you're going for chopping and grinding, you'll want to be sure a chopping blade is included. Pureeing, stirring and mixing will only require a standard blender. Stainless steel is the best material for a blade—it's strong and durable.
- **Power:** Immersion blenders are around 100-watts, and larger countertop blenders 500-watts or above.
- **Speed:** Depending on the model, it may have a pulsing knob or variable speed from 1 to 10. It also helps if there is continuous processing so that you do not have to manually hold down the button, especially when you're trying to add ingredients to the feed tube simultaneously.
- **Function:** Some blenders can crush ice, cook soup, and process dense foods, but not all. Some units come with pre-programmed functions for a smoothie, ice crushing, desserts, soup, dips, and spreads.
- **Cost:** The more functionality added, the quality of materials, and power, the more the cost goes up. Blenders could start as low as \$25 to as high as \$700. More affordable mid-range options are available and worth the investment.

On the higher end of the price spectrum are multifunction blenders, like a Vitamix. They come with commercial-grade construction and can cook soup, blend solid foods (like vegetables) and a host of other activities. For a versatile cook, a blender like this will replace many other appliances and could be a worthwhile investment.

Just remember, you get what you pay for, so you may be disappointed with something on the cheaper side because it may not be sturdy enough to break down tougher items.

## Popular on Amazon

Here are a few of the most popular blender manufacturers on Amazon.com



- [Vitamix](#)
- [Ninja](#)
- [Oster](#)

Some of the links above are affiliate links, which pay me a small commission for my referral at no extra cost to you!