

On the Cutting Edge

By Tom Dickson

Those who say a dull knife is more dangerous than a sharp one have never looked inside my medicine cabinet.

The adage derives from thinking that, because a worn blade requires more pressure to do the job, it's more likely to slip off the potato or whatever you're cutting and end up slicing your finger or hand.

Maybe that's true for some people. But I've found that a dull knife doesn't do much harm, because, well, it's dull. But a sharp one! That's where my medicine cabinet comes in. It contains every type of adhesive finger bandage you can imagine: sheer, flexible, waterproof, hydrocolloid gel, knuckle, butterfly, all in assorted sizes and shapes, along with bottles of iodine, hydrogen peroxide, Betadine, and other disinfectants.

I regularly slice or impale myself opening birthday presents, breaking down Amazon boxes, prying apart frozen bagels, or trying to carve into the clear plastic packaging that encases so many products these days. I also cook a lot, and too often end up cutting myself while peeling apples, dicing onions, mincing garlic, chopping cabbage, and

almost every time I tackle a winter squash.

Attempts to clean slime-covered fish have more than once sent me to urgent care for stitches.

These self-lacerations don't happen every day. But a few times each year, my wife comes home from walking the dog and follows drops of blood from the kitchen counter to the bathroom, where she finds me trying to open a bandage with my teeth while holding a dish towel tight around my left hand.

Perhaps tiring of the constant gore, last year she offered to buy me a metal-mesh knife-resistant glove.

What an insult. I already come up short in so many manly virtues as it is (though knife skills are obviously not just a guy thing. Both Rachel Ray and Nigella Lawson insist on proper knives and knife handling on their TV shows). I can't ride a horse, don't own a pickup, can't row a drift boat, and couldn't change a sparkplug to save my life. But a man, a Western man especially, should at least be able to handle a knife. I told her no thank you.

Oddly enough, I do know what I'm doing. In my 20s, I learned from a chef how to safely chop an onion or carrot by holding it with

curled fingers, the flat of the blade resting against the top knuckles.

I've filleted no small number of panfish, and I butcher deer, ducks, and pheasants each fall.

I know my way around knives. But apparently I don't pay close enough attention to what I'm doing. And too often I'm in a hurry. I've learned the hard way that knives don't like to be rushed.

Despite their hazards, I'm always on the lookout for more blades. When I enter a sporting goods store, I don't give the gun counter or optics case a second

glance, content with my modest few rifles, shotguns, and binoculars. But I can't seem to leave without spending a few minutes gazing longingly at the knives on display. "Gosh, that Benchmade Steep Country with drop-point S30V fixed blade seems like something a fellow ought to have," I'll think, reaching for my wallet.

I'm as easily seduced in a high-end cooking store. German-made parers, boners, and chef knives seem designed to make me a better cook. And I swoon over those nakiris, santokus, gyutous, yanagis, honesukis, and other trim, elegant Japanese kitchen blades.

I want more knives and I want them all razor sharp. A TV ad for one honing device I bought a few years ago shows a fellow horizontally slicing paper-thin slices off the top of a tomato resting on a cutting board. That's what I'm after—and I don't even like tomatoes.

In pursuit of the perfect edge, I've bought nearly as many knife sharpening devices as I have knives. These include the Chef's Choice manual and electric models, the Presto Eversharp, several ceramic rod V-sharpeners, round and oval sharpening steels, various Arkansas stones and diamond stones, the Lansky controlled-angle system, and the Accusharp. Unfortunately, they all either remove too much metal from the blade, take too much time to master, or require more dexterity than I can summon.

Then a month ago, after much online research, I bought myself the Ruixin Pro RX-008 Professional counter mount sharpener "with 360-degree rotation flip design" and went to work.

My knives have never been so sharp. The perfectly honed 20-degree edges handle all the chopping, dicing, mincing, and even plastic package opening I require. The problem is, I can hardly type anymore because my left fingers are so bandaged up. Good thing it only takes one hand to key in a credit card number.

The metal-mesh protector glove is scheduled to arrive next week. 🐾

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