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Kitchens

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New study suggests highly processed food is associated with cognitive decline —Tools to help you eat healthier

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Reviewed

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This just in: New research from the American Academy of Neurology found that highly processed food, such as sugary drinks and frozen meals, is associated with cognitive decline. The study found that individuals who received more than 20% of their daily calorie intake via high-processed food saw a faster cognitive performance decline over the span of 6 to 10 years compared to those who ate less processed food. While the study didn't establish causation, it did establish a strong association.

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If you're looking to cut back on the processed food you consume, we've got your back with tools that'll help you make healthier meals in a pinch. We know that cooking healthier can be cost-prohibitive, so read on for a variety of kitchen gadgets for every budget.

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Meal kit delivery services

The first step to eating healthier is making sure you have high-quality ingredients. This is made easy thanks to meal kits like the ones offered by Home Chef. With many well-written

recipes to choose from and quality, organized ingredients, we found Home Chef to be the best meal kit available. If you desire more flexibility, try Hungryroot which offers simpler recipes and ingredients that aren't as strictly portioned.

Getting recipes is only half the battle—many people turn to highly processed foods because they're more convenient (hey, it's called fast food for a reason). After a long day of work, many understandably don't have the energy to cook a meal, particularly if they're not a skilled chef. It's easier to order something from the closest drive-through or pick up a frozen dinner from the grocery store. Fortunately, thanks to pre-made meal kits, you don't have to sacrifice convenience for health. Freshly's ingredients taste so wonderfully fresh that Reviewed editor Meghan Kavanaugh could hardly believe that Freshly's meals were microwaved.

\$6.99 per meal from Home Chef

\$70 per delivery from Hungryroot

\$8.99 per meal from Freshly

Meal prep containers

Putting your food in a container can go a long way towards helping you eat healthier. If you portion your meals into small containers, you will have an easier time keeping track of how much you eat. Beyond this, containers allow you to prepare a meal and store it in advance or save uneaten food for later use. Of the container sets we've tested, the Pyrex Ultimate 10-pc Storage Set is our favorite. Its classy-looking glass is resilient enough to safely go in the oven and microwave. The Rubbermaid Easy Find Lids Food Storage Container set is a less-expensive alternative that is easy to store and comes with interchangeable, tight-fitting lids.

\$79.40 from Walmart

\$36.50 from Amazon

Knives

With all the fresh fruits, meat and vegetables you'll be handling, you'll need to find a way to cut them. Whether you're dicing, slicing or chopping, the knife will be your new best friend. Or rather, *knives*, seeing as the knife you use will differ depending on the kitchen task at hand. We've tested several knife sets and found the Wüsthof Classic 8901 7-piece Slim Knife Block Set to be the best. Its knives and shears are made from carbon stainless steel, which is

the best material for a knife thanks to its durability. The set is sharp and comfortable. Plus, the wooden block is very aesthetically pleasing. While the Cuisinart C77TR-15P Triple Rivet Collection 15-Piece Knife Block Set doesn't quite have the sharpness of other sets, it comes with more knives and is a great budget option at just under \$100. To make your knives last longer, we recommend getting a knife-sharpener.

\$595 from Amazon

\$79.99 from Amazon

Food processors

Don't be alarmed: Despite the name, food processors won't lead to your home meals being "highly processed." Instead, this versatile appliance will make preparing your fresh ingredients quick and easy. The Cuisinart DFP-14BCNY, which we rated the best food processor around, chops onions, grinds peanuts, slices tomatoes, kneads dough—and it does it all quickly. For something a bit more economical, we recommend the Black & Decker FP4200B. While it only holds eight cups of food compared to Cuisinart's whopping 14, it's more than capable of dicing your ingredients with ease.

\$232.14 from Amazon

\$41.88 from Amazon

Spiralizers

A spiralizer is a tool that cuts food into long thin strips. Whether you're julienning carrots for bibimbap or using zucchini as a gluten-free substitute for noodles, the OXO Good Grips Tabletop Spiralizer has you covered. We found it to be the best spiralizer on the market thanks to its blade storage, simple operation and dishwasher-safe parts. The Veggetti is a handheld alternative that has most of the benefits of a larger spiralizer at a fraction of the price.

\$47.95 from Amazon

\$9.99 from Amazon

Slow cooker

A slow cooker is a fixture in many kitchens thanks to the convenience it provides. The unofficial motto of slow cookers seems to be "set it and forget it" because that's exactly how you use them. You put all your ingredients in a pot and allow it to stew for hours, going about your day in the meantime. We found the Cuisinart 6-Quart 3-in-1 Cook Central Multicooker to be the best slow cooker on the market thanks to its superb temperature regulation and its intuitive controls. For a less pricey slow cooker, we suggest the Hamilton Beach Set and Forget 6-Quart Programmable Slow Cooker. It comes with a serving spoon and lid clips that make transporting the slow cooker easier.

\$159.95 from Amazon

\$97 from Amazon

Pressure cooker

Pressure cookers add versatility to the convenience of a slow cooker. In addition to the meals that slow cookers make, pressure cookers can make rice, yogurt and so much more. The Instant Pot Ultra 10-in-1 is the best pressure cooker thanks to its consistency during meal prep and ease of use. Whether you crave tender and juicy meat or sweet yogurt, the Instant Pot Ultra yields fantastic results. It is very intuitive to use and offers settings such as a cake maker and egg cooker. The Crockpot Express Easy Release is our value pick, with great customization options and several pre-programmed cooking presets that make preparing tricky meals easy.

\$139.99 from Amazon

\$89 from Amazon

Juicers

While fruit juice is much richer in nutrients than soda, it is still packed with added sugar. If you want a sweet, natural drink without any additives, consider buying a juicer. Beyond health, juicers are great because they allow you to customize your drinks as you see fit. Why settle for apple juice or orange juice when you can have a combination of the two? The Omega J8006HDS is the best juicer on the market thanks to its great juice yield and simple operation. The Omega H3000D Cold Press 365 is less expensive than its sister juicer and with its small size, it'll make an unobtrusive addition to your kitchen.

\$369.95 from Amazon

\$129.99 from Amazon

Water bottles

If you're looking to cut out highly processed drinks like soda, then you should drink more water. Staying properly hydrated can help you eat healthier, as we often misinterpret thirst for hunger. We've tested many different water bottles and we found Brita's stainless steel water bottle to be the best. Its filter keeps out strong odors and its steel keeps your water cold for up to 24 hours.

\$29.90 from Amazon

Air fryers

Trying to eat healthier, but love fried food? We have a solution. Because it uses hot air to cook food instead of oil, food prepared in an air fryer has fewer calories and less fat compared to meals made with a deep fryer. We recommend the Philips Premium Airfryer XXL after testing several air fryers on the market. It has a large capacity, allowing for family-sized portions to come out nice and crispy without the need for preheating. We chose the COSORI Pro Air Fryer for our best value pick—like the Philips air fryer, the COSORI allows you to fry a lot of food at once and you can guarantee it'll be nice and crispy.

\$199.99 from Amazon

\$119.99 from Amazon

Hand mixers

While mixing, stirring and beating ingredients can make for a decent arm workout, they also take up a lot of time. Mixers automate these processes, leading to faster meal preparation. Hand mixers are better for smaller tasks. We recommend the Cuisinart Power Advantage Plus, which efficiently mixes ingredients together and offers several speed settings. It also comes with a particularly helpful manual full of recipes. The Black + Decker Easy Storage Hand Mixer, a less expensive option, is simple to use and easy to clean.

\$74.94 from Amazon

\$22.99 from Amazon

Stand mixers

Stand mixers are more versatile than their handheld brethren and nothing is more indicative of this than the best stand mixer around, the KitchenAid Artisan 5-Quart Stand Mixer. The Artisan Stand Mixer offers support for many attachments (such as an ice cream maker and a pasta maker—for cheat meals, of course), which allow you to prepare even more types of food. While the less expensive Hamilton Beach Seven-Speed Mixer isn't compatible with any attachments, it's easy to use and remains a great stand mixer.

\$427.49 from Amazon

\$129.99 from Amazon

Tofu press

Tofu is the wonderfood of healthy eating. It features much fewer calories than the likes of beef or pork and while it has a reputation for being bland, it can be filled with flavor if you season it correctly. Tofu is extremely absorbent, so if it's been properly pressed it will soak up flavors like a sponge. While there are DIY solutions for pressing blocks of tofu, the easiest, most reliable way to do it is by making use of a dedicated tofu presser. We found the NOYA Adjustable Tofu Press to be the best, pressing large blocks of tofu dry, and with no cracks, in just 15 minutes. You can also use the press to soak your tofu in sauce after you press it.

\$21.99 from Amazon

Blender

Shakes and smoothies are delicious but can be quite sugary from any given store. To make healthier cold drinks right at home, it's time to invest in a blender.

“If you struggle to get enough fruits and veggies in a day, blending them up into a delicious smoothie is a great way to pack them in,” says Reviewed kitchen and cooking editor Danielle DeSiato. Her favorite nutrient-rich smoothie is a combination of frozen bananas, strawberries, spinach, half an avocado, a splash of maple syrup, almonds and milk—either almond or goat.

The Vitamix Ascent Series A3500 is our favorite blender of the many we've tested. It features a responsive touch screen that comes with five presets to make blending smoother. If that wasn't enough, the blender's Bluetooth functionality allows you to connect it to a mobile app

that features recipes and additional presets such as baby food, nut milk and ice cream. The Instant Ace Nova is a less expensive blender that is easy to use, cleans itself and blends evenly.

\$649.95 from Amazon

\$147.49 from Amazon

Egg bite maker

If you're looking for a fun and easy way to manage the portions of your new, homemade meals, we recommend using the Dash Egg Bite Maker. This nifty appliance is small enough to fit in any kitchen, easy to use and quite versatile. Don't let the name fool you—it can be used to make mini desserts and custards, alongside perfect egg bites.

\$24.99 from Amazon

Kitchen scales

Kitchen scales offer another way to portion your meals. They're also the most accurate method of getting your ingredient ratios just right when cooking or baking, and are even great help in brewing pour-over coffee due to the precision required. Out of the scales we tested, we found the Escali Primo to be the best. It's simple to use, its display stays on as long as you need it to and it has options for both imperial and metric units.

\$27.14 from Amazon

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