

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Food\\_processor](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Food_processor)

A **food processor** is a kitchen appliance used to facilitate repetitive tasks in the preparation of [food](#). Today, the term almost always refers to an electric-motor-driven appliance, although there are some manual devices also referred to as "food processors".

Food processors are similar to [blenders](#) in many ways. The primary difference is that food processors use interchangeable blades and disks (attachments) instead of a fixed blade. Also, their bowls are wider and shorter, a more appropriate shape for the solid or semi-solid foods usually worked in a food processor. Usually, little or no liquid is required in the operation of the food processor, unlike a blender, which requires some amount of liquid to move the particles around the blade.

## Functions

Food processors normally have multiple functions, depending on the placement and type of attachment or blade. These functions normally consist of:

- [Slicing/chopping vegetables](#)
- Grinding items such as nuts, seeds (e.g. spices), meat, or [dried fruit](#)
- [Shredding](#) or grating cheese or vegetables
- [Pureeing](#)
- Mixing and kneading doughs

## Design and operation

The base of the unit houses a motor which turns a vertical shaft. A bowl, usually made of transparent plastic, fits around the shaft. Cutting blades can be attached to the shaft; these fit so as to operate near the bottom of the bowl. Shredding or slicing disks can be attached instead; these spin near the top of the bowl. A lid with a "feed tube" is then fitted onto the bowl.

The feed tube allows ingredients to be added while chopping, grinding or pureeing. It also serves as a chute through which items are introduced to shredding or slicing disks. A "pusher" is provided, sized to slide through the feed tube, protecting fingers.

Almost all modern food processors have safety devices which prevent the motor from operating if the bowl isn't properly affixed to the base or if the lid is not properly affixed to the bowl.

<http://housewares.about.com/od/blendersprocessors/bb/buyingafoodprocessor.htm>

A food processor is a handy and time-saving appliance, but before buying one, there are a few things to consider so that you buy the size and type that meets your particular food prep needs.

### **Deciding on Capacity & Size**

Your first processor buying decision is capacity. Processors come in various sizes from the 1-3 cup chopping variety to large 12-cup models. A mid-size 7-10 cup model is popular mostly for small-batch chopping and for slicing/shredding for occasional salads. A smaller chopper will suit those that regularly chop small amounts of onions, vegetables or nuts. If you like to make pickles, often make large salads or want to make bread dough in a processor, you'll need the larger 12-cup model.

### **Types of Food Processors**

Next, do you want a chopper, slicer or more processing function? The term '[food processor](#)' can include a wide range of appliances from basic small choppers or salad slicers, to juicers or specialty food or meat processors, but more commonly, it refers to larger units that have chopping, slicing, shredding and even dough processing abilities, depending on the accessories. Some models have attachments to maximize convenience and function. For this reason, prices can range from well under \$100 to several hundreds depending on function and accessories.

### **Attachments Increase Processing Function**

Once you've narrowed down the type of processor you want and capacity, it's important to give some thought to what kind of processing you want to do. If you want to merely chop - you don't need much in way of accessories, but if you want to make bread dough - you'll need a dough hook attachment. Food processors come with little or much in way of accessories and some models (not all) offer optional attachments. Decide which attachments matter to you and confirm that they're included or can be purchased separately, before buying.

### **Performance & Features**

Performance will vary based on unit size and capacity, but a 500-600 watt motor has reasonable power to handle most food processing tasks. If you tend to make large salads often and want to process bread doughs, look for a larger unit with at least 600 and higher wattage. Many 7-10 cup models come with only one slicing/shredding disk. For more accessories, you'll need to look in the \$200 and up price range. [Best food processor features](#) include a wider feeding tube, more than one slicing/shredding disk and disc holder, dough hook and convenient smaller work bowl.

## Should You Consider a Multifunction or Combo Appliance

[Multifunction appliances](#) can save on the budget as well as space, but they're not for everyone. There are exceptions, but appliances that multi-tasked often do a mediocre job of one function and if you use each function often, buying individual, more [efficient appliances](#) may be a better choice. If you're not sure if you'll ever use the added function, you may be paying more which could be a waste. That being said, a dual appliance such as blender/chopper can be perfect for some households, especially those that only occasionally use one of the functions.

### Food Processor vs Chopper

It really depends whether you want to chop or do more with the appliance. Those who are creative and like to experiment with food prep will likely want a full-featured food processor that has cutting discs for slicing, grating and shredding. Many kitchens have a larger food processor to handle the bigger tasks, as well as a smaller 1-4 cup chopper for everyday onions, nuts and vegetable chopping.

<http://www.which.co.uk/home-and-garden/small-appliances/reviews/food-processors/page/features-explained/>

Food processor reviews: Features explained

## Food processors: the basics

Food preparation kitchen appliances such as food processors and stand mixers are a great choice if you're a keen cook who likes making meals from scratch, like to batch cook meals and freeze them, or if you want to enjoy home-cooked food without spending hours in the kitchen preparing it - and cleaning up afterwards.

Food processors are designed to make life in the kitchen easier for you. You'll still have to weigh and prepare food, but you'll save precious time by letting the food processor or mixer tackle the trickier tasks, often in seconds. Plus, the results are a lot more consistent than can be achieved by hand.

Below we guide you to the different types of food prep gadgets and the features to look out for. Once you've decided what type of food processor to buy, head to our our food processor reviews to find out [what makes a Best Buy food processor](#) and which models earn our experts' seal of approval.

## Food processor, stand mixer or mini chopper?

### Food processors

A food processor's main tasks are chopping, slicing, mixing and grating. They're smaller in size than stand mixers (also known as a stand mixers or food mixers).

Most models come with a knife blade and a dough blade (or dough hook) as well as shredding and slicing discs. Some food processors come with extra accessories, such as a blender, mill or mini chopper, and some can even do additional tasks such as chipping or making mayonnaise.

Most food processors include attachments for mixing cake batter, whipping and whisking, but if this is the main reason for buying a food preparation appliance then a stand mixer (otherwise known as a kitchen machine) may be a better choice, as these appliances really excel at these tasks.

### Stand mixers

Stand mixers are much larger than food processors, and usually come supplied with a big balloon whisk, a dough hook and a beater. They can also come with extras attachments such

as a blender or a food processor, which make the appliance much more useful, but will also push the cost up.

The [KitchenAid](#) and [Kenwood Chef](#) also have a range of additional attachments you can buy such as a mincer, ice cream maker, or juicer.

A stand mixer's main tasks are mixing cakes, kneading dough, whipping and whisking. Stand mixers excel at these tasks - much more so than food processors, due to their large capacities and big, metal balloon whisks - and are ideal for taking the hard work out of making large batches of cakes, dough or batter.

Watch our [stand mixer buying guide video](#) to find out more about stand mixers and what they offer.

### **Mini choppers**

If you just want to chop the odd onion, or blend a small portion of baby food, then a mini chopper may be the answer. A mini chopper is a much smaller version of a food processor, and some cost as little as £20.

Mini choppers are specifically designed to chop or purée small quantities of food quickly. They aren't designed for mixing, whisking, whipping, for chopping really hard items or for liquids, though.

Use our [food processor comparison tool](#) to find details of the latest mini choppers that we've reviewed and rated.

### **What food preparation appliance do I need?**

A food processor is a good investment if you prepare lots of homemade food, as it will help you save valuable time in the kitchen, taking the hard work out of many tasks, especially if you chop, slice or grate large amounts of vegetables.

If you make lots of cakes, dough or batters and need to whisk egg whites or whip cream, a stand mixer will suit better.

Even if you have a food processor or stand mixer, there may be times when you need to quickly purée a small amount of food, chop an onion or even make a quick dip.

In these instances, using a mini chopper will save you messing up your regular-sized appliance, and will be a good addition to your kitchen.

## Food processor attachments and accessories

To get the best out of your food preparation appliance, think about what you'll want your food processor to do - then make sure it comes with the tools you need.

- **Knife blade** Standard blade included with all appliances. It's used for mixing, mincing, mashing and puréeing, as well as chopping. Sometimes called a multi-purpose blade.
- **Dough hook or blade** For kneading yeasted recipes, such as sweet and savoury breads. Most food processors will come with a dough blade.
- **Shredding and slicing blade** Blades come in different sizes, so you can shred and slice to a fine, medium, coarse or thick finish. Some models come with a chipping blade to make homemade chips or french fries. Blades will either be separate or on a single metal reversible disc, with one side used for shredding and one for slicing.
- **Grating blade** Similar to the slicing and shredding blades, the grating blade can be used for cheese or vegetables.
- **Jug blender** A jug blender attachment makes the main appliance more versatile, as you can purée food, make mayonnaise, blend milkshakes or sometimes crush ice (check the instructions first). Most manufacturers recommend you blend only cooled liquids. Sometimes the blades can get stuck, though - be very careful when freeing them.
- **Potato rasp** Can be used for grating hard parmesan cheese, potatoes, vegetables, coconut and nutmeg.
- **Maxi-blend canopy** This large disk, found only on Kenwood models, can be used in conjunction with the knife blade to blend soups more effectively. It works by changing the way the processor blends, which Kenwood claims makes the food processor more efficient
- **Citrus press or juicer** A cone and sieve for juicing oranges, lemons, grapefruits and limes. If you want to juice hard fruits or vegetables, you'll need a centrifugal juicer attachment, though you may be better off with a [juicer](#).
- **Mill** For making small quantities of puree, grinding coffee beans and spices, and chopping nuts and herbs.
- **Whisk** This can come in various guises - you might get an emulsifying disc or whisk paddle or beaters. On food processors, twin beaters are the most effective and metal twin beaters give the best results.
- **Mini bowl** A small bowl with its own blade that fits inside the main bowl. Chopping is slower because the blade is shorter and therefore less effective at circulating the food, but for small quantities it can be more effective and saves on washing up the main bowl.
- **Spatula** This is to help you scrape food away from the sides of the bowl.

## Mini choppers

A mini chopper is a mini version of a food processor. Mini choppers rose to fame after Delia Smith used one as a 'cheat' gadget on her TV show in 2008.

They take up hardly any counter space, can quickly chop or purée, and are great for blitzing a paste or dip in seconds. However, mini choppers can't process large batches of food, and shouldn't be used for processing hot food or liquids.

Most mini choppers aren't suitable for chopping hard foods such as coffee beans, ice or nutmeg, but some of the most recent models we've seen are capable of performing some of these tasks.

A mini chopper is ideal for making dips, chopping onions or herbs or puréeing baby food. Most don't come with any accessories, and aren't suitable for making dough or cake mixtures. There are some exceptions to this, such as the [Magimix Le Micro](#), which comes with an emulsifying attachment for making mayonnaise.

## 4 Types of Food Processors Explained

Although we tend to think of **food processors** as one particular kind of appliance, there are actually several types of food processors. They all do the same basic task, which is to chop and mix the ingredients together. Knowing what's available can help you make the right decision when choosing food processors. Much will be dependent on the size of your family. You'll need something far more heavy duty when preparing food for four people than for one.

### *Blender*

A blender is usually used for liquids or soft foods, but it's a type of food processor. Some do come with attachments for chopping, although you'll need to pay more for these models. With most models, you'll have blades that are capable of crushing ice, which is useful for some cold drinks. As food processors, they're really only good for soft foods, such as berries and other fruits, so their usefulness is very limited.

### *Hand Operated*

A hand-operated chopper will work well for basic food processing, such as chopping onions and other vegetables. There will either be a bowl with the unit, or the vegetables will go on the chopping board. You have to press down on the top for the blades to cut. The great advantage to these is that they're small and quick to clean and store, much more so than the full sized food processors. If you're only cutting or dicing small amounts, these are perfect. Again, these have limited use, and can only chop, not mix the way motorized food processors can.

### *Mini Food Processors*

In many ways, mini food processors are just more compact versions of the real things. They can do fewer tasks, and the bowl is smaller, so you can only work on less of any item at a time. For single people or those with small families, mini food processors can be perfect, however, and can perform many chopping and mixing activities. As long as you're happy with units that are essentially basic and can only process food in small quantities, a mini food processor can be ideal.

### *Full Sized Food Processors*

These are what most people imagine when they think of food processors. The bowl will have a capacity of up to 12 cups and come with several different discs, each with a different function. The biggest and most expensive will even have a dough hook to enable you to mix bread. These tend to be very expensive.

Most full sized food processors have a feeding tube. This allows the cook to add ingredients gradually, while a lid with blades allows for the slicing of vegetables into the mix. A good

food processor will have different speeds and also allow you to “pulse” the blades for a few seconds, which might be all you need. This offers you greater control over the unit. Prices will vary according to the accessories included with the unit. For the top brands with all the accessories, you should expect to pay a few hundred dollars. These will have powerful motors able to handle all types of jobs, however, and will last for many years.

<http://housewares.about.com/od/blendersprocessors/a/typesoffoodprocessors.htm>

Though we commonly think of the term 'food processor' as a counter appliance or kitchen tool that chops, slices, shreds, grates or minces/grinds foods, the term actually can have a long reaching application that easily incorporates several different types of food processing equipment from juicers to manual choppers, because they all work to process foods, in one form or another.

However, for the purpose of this article, we'll look at typical food processors and note their unique differences. Though some may seem similar, not all food processors have the same function, and these differences become very important when you are considering buying one.

Please note that though I've listed the typical function of each type, not all models include blades or discs for each function. This is merely to indicate that some tools are more commonly designed for one function or another, but exceptions do exist.

### **Blenders - Blending, Mixing**

Though some models have processing functions or attachments for chopping, most blenders can only blend or mix [soft foods](#) or liquids. Depending on the blade, some models can crush ice for blended frozen drinks.

[Blender Buying Tips](#)

[Blender Reviews](#)

### **Hand-Operated Food Choppers - Chopping, Dicing**

This is the [kind of chopper](#) where you place the onion or vegetable in small portions either in the unit or on a [cutting board](#), and a hand slap on the top springs the blade assembly into action to chop. Some models have a rotary hand-turn operation. Inexpensive, easy to store and operate, these small choppers can be very convenient for quick, small chopping/dicing tasks.

[More About Hand Choppers](#)

### **Mandolines - Slicing, Shedding, Grating**

These range from plastic varieties to quality [stainless steel](#) units that usually include different sizes of cutting blades for slicing, grating or shredding. The process is usually done by moving the vegetables back and forth over the cutting blades. It's a quick, manual process with a mandoline that is reasonably easy to store and use. The process does not usually include chopping.

### **[Cheese Graters](#) - Grating**

These are mostly manual and come in various styles for [grating cheese](#) and most households have more than one shape or size. The most common is the box type where the grated cheese accumulates in the center of the grater, but the fun [rotary style](#) that is used in restaurants for hard cheeses such as parmesan, has become a family dinner favorite.

Electric food processors (described below), may have a disc that can be used for grating large quantities of cheese.

### **Coffee Grinders - [Grinding Coffee Beans](#)**

Due to the shape of the cutter and design of the appliance, [coffee grinders](#) should be used only for grinding fresh coffee beans. They're small, economical and practical appliances for grinding your own beans to improve the taste of your coffee. There are some [coffee makers](#) that are designed with [a built-in coffee grinder](#).

### **Vegetable or Meat Grinders - Grinding**

These come in electric and manual models and though they are very useful kitchen tools, their function is mainly to grind with a variety of discs for fine to coarse grinding.

[Antique Meat Grinders](#)

### **Hand-Operated Ricers - Ricing**

Once used merely for [ricing potatoes](#), creative cooks have expanded on this decades-old kitchen tool, using it to push through other soft cooked vegetables or fresh noodles.

[Vintage Potato Ricers & How to Buy a Ricer](#)

### **Juicers - Separate Juice from Pulp**

Though juicers do process fruits and vegetables, they merely remove the juice from the pulp, something a food processor cannot do. Electric juicers are more popular than manual models since they require less effort, but are more expensive.

### **Hand-Held Salad Slicers - Slicing, Shredding, Grating**

Presto's SaladShooter™ made these types of small hand-held electric slicers very popular. They're time-savers and designed to be held while slicing vegetables directly into a salad. Operation is simple and they're easy to store and clean.

### **Compact or Mini Choppers/Processors - Chopping, Grinding, Mixing**

Though they are called processors, their functions are limited. These are 1-4 cup appliances for [chopping onions](#), nuts and spices, or for making small batches of dressings, salsa, vegetables or condiments. They're very convenient for everyday chopping/mixing needs and for making baby food from left-overs. These small choppers typically do not have any slicing or shredding abilities because they lack a feeding tube and cutting discs.

### **[Large Food Processors](#) - Various Functions From Chopping to Bread Dough**

Typically called [food processors](#), these can be found in various capacity sizes, from 5-12 cups with the smaller range being more of a chopper with limited processing abilities.

A 5-9 cup food processor will often have one disc (circular blade cutter) that enables at

least some slicing, grating and shredding. Prices of these units are influenced by power performance as well as the number of accessories. A large food processor with several discs, a dough hook plus a smaller work bowl, will be priced in the higher range, but you'll be able to use it for several applications.

How can you tell what function a particular food processor has? Look at the accessories and the design of the unit. A processor that only chops, will not have a feeding tube design which is needed for adding foods to be sliced or shredded. Some food processors may have limited accessories, but optional ones may be available for purchase to increase its function.

## What Are the Functions of Food Processors?

Use a food processor for a variety of kitchen tasks.

Food processors can handle most of the prep tasks that ordinarily would be carried out with a knife and cutting board, blender, grater, stand mixer, pastry blender and mortar and pestle. Food processors come in many sizes, from machines used for large-scale cooking in professional kitchens to processors that prepare food for one portion, but they all carry out the same basic functions. Have a question? Get an answer from an appliance repair specialist now!

### Chopping

The main blade of a food processor has an S-shape and is used for chopping. When you put items in the bowl of the food processor and turn it on, the blade spins around and chops them into small pieces. Control the size of the pieces by how long you run the processor, with longer times leading to smaller pieces. Items to chop in a food processor include onions, herbs, tomatoes and nuts. The chopping blade can even grind meat, too.

### Slicing

The slicing blade of a food processor slices foods as you drop them into the chute at the top of the processor. Some processors come with blades that slice foods to a few different thicknesses. Slice carrots, cucumbers, zucchini, eggplant and other vegetables in the food processor. Use the food processor to slice apples when making apple pie or other desserts.

### Grating

The grating disk of a food processor makes quick work of grating a block of cheese and saves cooks from risking grating their fingertips as well. Other foods to grate in a food processor include carrots, potatoes for hash browns and zucchini for making bread.

### Pureeing

Food processors effectively puree all sorts of food, from chick peas to make hummus to tomatoes to make tomato sauce. You can also puree lumpy soups into smooth ones. One consideration when pureeing in a food processor is that many types of processors will leak if filled too high. You can typically only fill the work bowl about halfway when pureeing liquids, unless the processor is especially designed to be leak-proof when filled completely.

### Making Doughs

The basic chopping blade on the food processor can incorporate butter into flour when making dough for a pie crust. This process only requires a few pulses of the processor and replaces the task of cutting butter in with a pastry blender. Some food processors also come with a dough blade that you can use to knead bread dough.