

Choosing Pans

Kitchen

What each material does well, and what it should never be used for.

The trade-offs are between conduction, reactivity and durability.

Material	Good at	Avoid
Stainless steel	Searing, deglazing, sauces	Eggs, delicate fish
Cast iron	Heat retention, searing	Long-simmered acids
Non-stick	Eggs, pancakes, fish	High heat; metal utensils
Carbon steel	Like cast iron, lighter	Acidic dishes
Enamelled cast iron	Braising, everything	Very high heat
Copper	Precise control	Cost; needs polishing

Non-stick coatings degrade above about 260°C and with metal utensils. Treat non-stick pans as consumables.