

Butcher-block worktables

With their warm look and impressive heft, these two stand ready to serve your wildest Iron Chef dreams. So what makes one more than twice the price of the other?

By DEBORAH BALDWIN + Photograph by MARK WEISS

Back in the day, chopping blocks were made by slicing logs into rounds, which were hard enough but tended to split under the butcher's blows. Later, wood scraps were fused end—grain up to form slabs that could be gouged, sanded, oiled, and handed down—for decades. Butcher block has since found a home in residential kitchens, joining high-powered stainless-steel ranges and vent hoods as signs of a serious cook. Today, with top chefs doing nightly knife battle on TV, butcher block's macho appeal is stronger than ever. So what makes these tables different? The choice of the hardwood, direction of the grain, thickness of the slab, height of the table, girth of the legs—and price, of course.

High-End

John Boos

PRO PREP BUTCHER-BLOCK TABLE

Size: 24 by 24 by 36 inches Weight: 105 pounds

→ \$755

\$365 ←

Budget

Catskill Craftsmen

FRENCH COUNTRY BUTCHER-BLOCK TABLE

Size: 24 by 24 by 24 by 33 1/2 inches Weight: 79 pounds

IS IT FOR YOU?

If you like the idea of investing in a family heirloom and love the look of end grain.

surface

Kiln-dried hard-maple strips, about 1 3/4 by 1/2 inch, laminated end-up, form a 4-inch-thick reddish-brown checkerboard, which may have black mineral specks. End grain is less likely to show scratches than edge grain but isn't necessarily easier on knives. Kept clean, dry, sanded, and oiled, the block should last decades.

surface

One-inch-wide strips of kiln-dried yellow birch are laminated edge-grain up to form a 3-inch slab with occasional mineral streaks and color variations (white to light reddish brown). Like end grain, edge grain can be repeatedly sanded. Kept clean, dry, and oiled, the table should last many years.

IS IT FOR YOU?

If you see yourself as a family cook and want to be able to move your workstation without calling in help.

storage

Two hollow, heavy-duty stainless-steel bars can hold towels or hooks. The open shelf, made of 3/4-inch maple slats, is sturdy enough for cast-iron pots.

Structure

Arrives in two parts with corner braces in place. Chunky solid maple legs, capped with thin metal gliders, are bolted on and, along with the open shelf, contribute to the table's impressive stability.



storage

Two hollow, lighter-weight stainless-steel bars hold towels or pot hooks.

Structure

Top and bottom assemble with corner braces and screws. Solid yellow-birch legs and adjustable leveling feet make it stable, though the screws need periodic retightening.