

CONSUMER

FOCUS

A JOURNAL ON EDUCATED CONSUMERISM FOR NEW IMMIGRANTS

The Ministry of Immigrant Absorption



- Protect Yourself from On-Line Scams
- How to Buy a Digital Camera
- Tips for Purchasing a Used Car
- How to Appeal a Traffic Ticket
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A Word From The Editor

Welcome to the fifth issue of ConsumerFocus! I would like to once again thank everyone who wrote in and sent feedback forms, and to let you know how much I appreciate your comments and suggestions. Several of you commented on how much they enjoyed the fashion and decorating tips in ConsumerFocus #4 and asked for more. We're happy to oblige, and are already gathering tips for future issues. The article on shampoos also provoked its share of responses; more than one hair professional pointed out that while the findings may apply to drugstore shampoos, specially-made salon products are often more likely to deliver on their promises. Others added that while it may not matter what shampoo you choose, it is important to use a good conditioner.

In this issue we focus on how to protect yourself from the on-line menace of e-mail fraud, how to shop for cookware, digital cameras, and bicycle helmets, how to combat household mold, and how to care for pets in Israel. Just for fun, we take a look at the ubiquitous Sabra (the fruit, not the person.) And, as always, we include a resource guide.

We hope you enjoy this issue of
ConsumerFocus.

Happy consuming!

Laura Woolf

Editor, ConsumerFocus Magazine



S A F E S U R F I N G

Don't Get Hooked by On-Line Phishing Scams!



You open your e-mail one day and find a tantalizing invitation to respond to an internet survey in return for a valuable prize. Or find a warning from an on-line merchant with whom you've shopped that your account information needs to be verified immediately.

Don't be fooled by scams! Read on for ways to protect yourself.

E-mail scams, known as "phishing," are becoming an increasingly common way for con-artists to obtain your personal financial information. It has been estimated that there are over 250,000 scammers involved in 419 scams worldwide and that they make over \$1.5 billion annually. Victims of these scams have sometimes paid out sums approaching \$20,000.

Phishing scams come in a variety of forms. In many instances, it is fairly obvious when an unsolicited E-mail is a fake; it is usually obvious from the poor spelling and punctuation, or the far-fetched claims such as that a person you never heard of has left you money.

Other scams are more sophisticated, and seem like legitimate offers from established companies, or requests to update your personal details with accounts that you actually hold. Don't be duped into responding - once the scammer has your personal information it can be used to make purchases with your credit card and access your funds.

You can help to protect yourself and your information with the following tips:

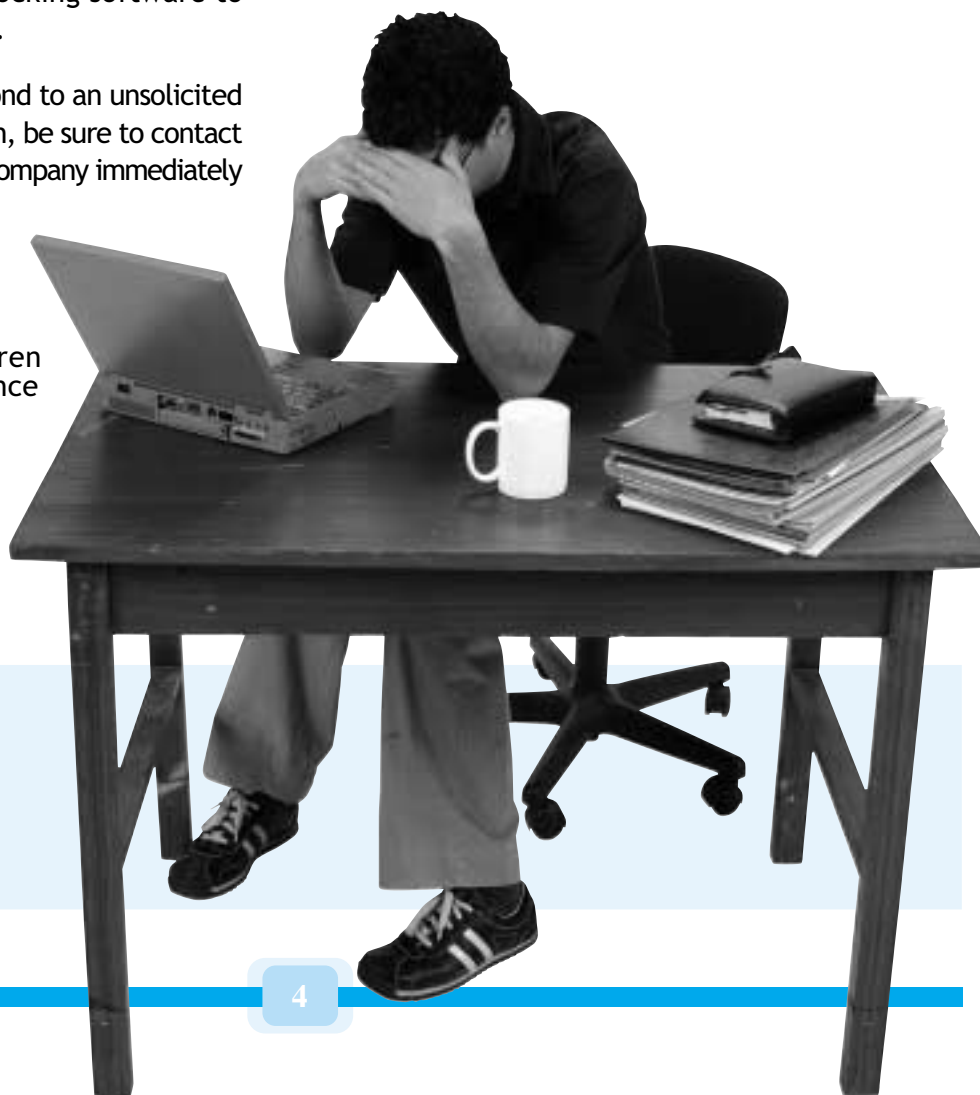
- Never give out your personal financial details in response to an unsolicited e-mail, a phone call, or a fax. If you think the query may be valid, call back the company yourself, using a telephone number or website that you know is legitimate, and ask them to verify their query.
- Monitor your credit card and bank account statements, and check for any unfamiliar or unusual transactions. If you notice anything out of the ordinary, contact your bank or credit card company for instructions.

S A F E S U B S C R I B I N G

- To make sure that your on-line purchases are secure, watch for the Web address to change from 'http' to 'shttp' or 'https', indicating that the information is being encrypted, e.g. transformed into a code that can only be read by the merchant. Look for a signal that the information is secure, such as a broken key icon that becomes whole or a padlock that closes.
- Never enter your personal information in a pop-up screen. Legitimate companies don't normally use pop-up screens for registering personal information; if a pop-up screen appears when you visit the Website of a company, it is likely that it was created by an identity thief trying to trick you into providing your personal information. Many people install pop-up blocking software to help protect themselves.
- If you do unwittingly respond to an unsolicited query and send information, be sure to contact your bank and credit card company immediately so that they can take measures to protect your accounts.
- Be sure that your children understand the importance



of not giving out any form of personal information over the Internet or by e-mail, or in chat rooms, including their name, age, address or where they go to school.



Snap Decisions Smart Shopping for Digital Cameras



With all the terminology and features confronting you when you set out to purchase a digital camera, it's easy to become intimidated, and even to be sold a far more expensive and elaborate model than you want or need. Here's what you need to know so that your camera purchase doesn't become a "negative" experience!

What Are Your Needs?

Before purchasing a digital camera, evaluate your needs. Do you want a camera that you can use every day to send photos of the new baby to the folks overseas, or one that you will only use occasionally for vacations? Do you want to take art photos or family portraits? The answers to these questions will effect the kinds of models and features you should be looking for.

Megapixels

A pixel is a single point in a graphic image. Manufacturers list pixel-capabilities by the million, resulting in the term "megapixels." The higher the pixel count, the sharper an image will be, giving you a better-quality photo. Megapixel capacity also affects your options for cropping, resizing, and printing out your photos. With most camera models, a 2-megapixel camera can give you high-quality 5x7 print; a 3-megapixel

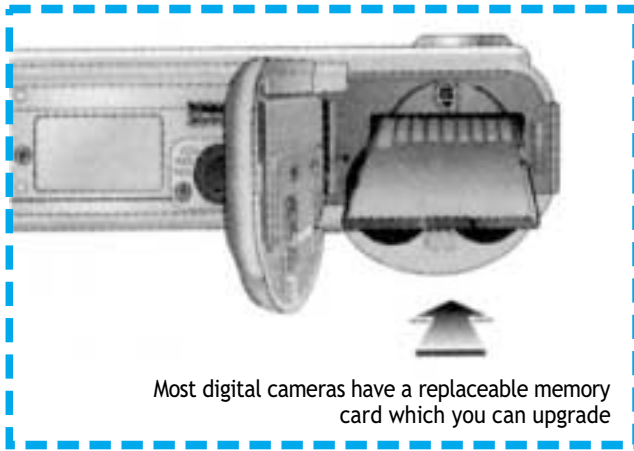


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camera can give you a high-quality 8x10 print, and a 4- megapixel model an 11x17 print.

Zoom lens

If you want to take quality photos of scenery, sporting events, concerts, and other long-distance subjects, a zoom lens can be an important consideration. But be careful. Some cameras only have what is often called "digital zoom," which means that it will capture and magnify fewer pixels, therefore enlarging the image. An "optical zoom" lens actually moves when photographing so that your subject is magnified.



Most digital cameras have a replaceable memory card which you can upgrade

Storage

The higher the megapixel count and resolution of your photos, the more storage space they require. Images are stored on a "card." Most models have enough storage space for the average casual user. If you do wish to store large numbers of images, you will need to look for a camera with greater storage capacity.

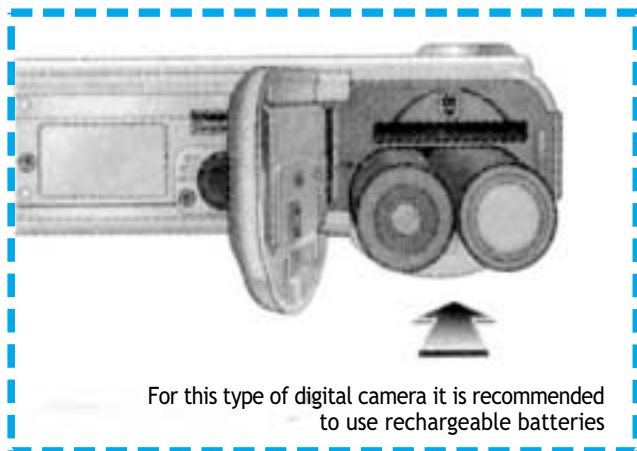
Size

Consider whether you want a camera that will fit into your pocket or handbag, or if you don't mind carrying a larger camera in case. Remember that a smaller camera will have smaller buttons and controls; controls on a larger model may be easier to find and operate. Don't be shy about trying out the menus and controls in the shop before purchasing to make sure that they are easily understandable and uncomplicated to use.



Power

Most cameras use regular batteries (usually AA). However, regular batteries tend to run out quickly, making them expensive and inconvenient. An alternative is to purchase a camera with a built-in rechargeable battery. Another possibility is to purchase rechargeable batteries.



For this type of digital camera it is recommended to use rechargeable batteries

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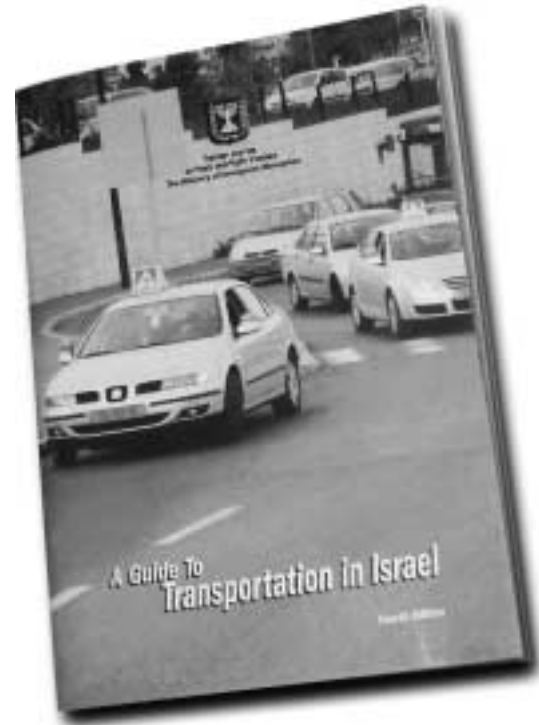
You can never be too cautious when purchasing a used a used car. The Ministry of Transport offers the following advice:

- Be sure that the seller is the registered owner of the vehicle. Check for discrepancies between the seller's personal information (e.g. name, identity number, address) as it appears on their *te'udat zehut* and on their driver's license.
 - If the seller is not the registered owner of the vehicle, request to see a power of attorney permitting the sale of the vehicle.
 - It is recommended to meet with the seller of the car in person, and not deal exclusively over the telephone.
 - Be on your guard with a seller who will only give you a cell phone number, and is not willing to give you a home phone number and address.
- Be wary of purchasing a car from an individual who has only owned it for a short time. It is not usual to sell a car that has been owned for only a few days or weeks.
 - Have the car checked by a servicing center or garage before purchasing. It is best to use a center that you are familiar with and trust, and not rely on the seller's recommendation. Have the center or garage note the serial numbers listed on the body and engine, in addition to performing a mechanical inspection. Keep a copy of the serial numbers, and do not purchase any vehicle if the serial numbers do not match those on the purchase document (*shtar hamecher*). As long as the documents have not been signed, and the transfer fees have not been paid, ownership has not been transferred and the transaction may be halted at any time.
 - Be aware that if there is no correspondence between details on the *shtar hamecher* and the seller's license, the license may be a fake.
 - If you have any doubts or suspicions regarding the seller's integrity, you can ask them to accompany you to the Licensing Bureau. If they refuse to do so, this may be an indication that they are not acting in good faith.

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- Responsibility for clarifying all details regarding the vehicle, the ownership of vehicle, any restrictions on the vehicle, and all other information, rests with both sides of the transaction.
- Transfer of ownership can be processed in most cases at a post office branch. However, be aware that the Postal Authority does not possess complete information, and that the postal clerks are not responsible for checking or comparing data. Check with the Licensing Bureau when clarifying information. Investigations by the Licensing Bureau are made only with the *te'udat zehut* of the vehicle's owner.

Excerpted from "A Guide to Transportation, Fifth Edition," available from the Publications Department.



APPEALING A TRAFFIC TICKET

You are entitled to appeal traffic tickets that have been issued by a police officer or that have been generated following an offense caught on camera.

- Submit your request in writing, including the reasons why you believe the fine should be cancelled, to the Police Traffic Department in the location of the violation. Enclose a photocopy of the ticket with the request.
- Drivers who receive a ticket directly from a police officer have 30 days to appeal and 90 days to pay.
- Tickets that are generated automatically following a violation that was caught on camera may be appealed within 60 days of the date printed on the original request for payment.



SHOP WISE - SAVE MONEY

Quick Tips for Savvy Consumers:

- Planning to purchase electric appliances? Try to time your purchase after a new model is introduced; the older models will probably be discounted.
- A good time to buy furniture is towards the end of the year; shops want to clear the floor area for the next year's models.
- Work out your supermarket purchases in advance; plan your menus and decide exactly what you need, then bring the right amount of cash to cover the bill; this way you won't be tempted into spending more money than you planned to.
- Don't be fooled by 2+1 deals, unless you really need three of the item. If an item is offered as a gift, be sure you ascertain exactly what you need to spend to receive the gift and if the expense is justified. If the gift is something that you really do want or need, investigate whether it would simply be cheaper to purchase the item itself.
- Don't purchase "economy" size or "extra-large" sizes of products unless they are products you use on a regular basis, or have a long shelf-life and won't spoil before you finish using them.
- Always check your receipts after every purchase. Remember, the law mandates that if you are charged a higher price at the register than the price listed on the item, you must be given the lower price.
- Try not to shop for groceries with small children; they can cause your bill to increase dramatically!
- Check your health-fund pharmacy for discounts on vitamins, skin creams, and other over-the-counter items.
- Always ask a shop to gift-wrap presents when you purchase them. You'll save on wrapping paper, and some shops will even throw in a gift tag at no extra cost.
- Try to avoid paying for groceries with installments. The monthly payments accumulate and you

may find that you are paying more per month than if you had made only one payment for each purchase

- Be wary of making large purchases (appliances, furniture) from a merchant who demands a large proportion of the payment at once. This could be an indication of a business with financial problems.
- Take advantage of on-line customer reviews and users' forums before making a purchase. You can learn a great deal from others' experiences with a product, discover tips for using products, learn the pros and cons and find out what products to avoid.



Readers' Corner

Lorelle Amster from Haifa sent us this great idea.

When the supply of English-language greeting cards I brought with me when I made aliyah ran out, I discovered printable greeting cards on the Internet. There are quite a few sites that offer free printable cards and envelopes that you can tailor to your needs. My kids and I have a lot of fun going on-line to find just the right card for any occasion!

Thanks for sharing Lorelle!

Solomon Keston from Bat Yam sent in this helpful link:

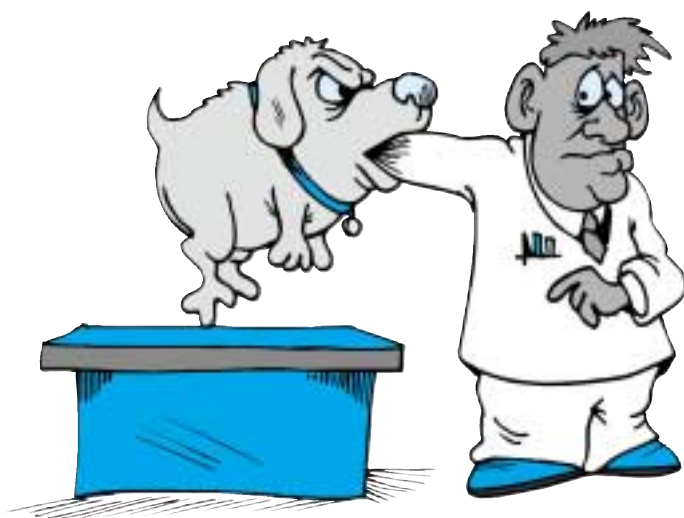
You can find a free, interactive on-line Hebrew dictionary published by Jacob Richman located at

www.learn-hebrew.co.il

Thanks Solomon!

E N V I R O N M E N T

The Ministry of Environmental Protection - A Profile



The Ministry of Environmental Protection (HaMisrad Lehaganat HaSviva) is the government body responsible for environmental policy, implementing pollution-control programs, introducing legislation, and promoting environmental awareness among the public.

The Ministry of Environmental Protection:
www.sviva.gov.il

Among the many areas the Ministry deals in are conservation of national resources, supervision of sewage, hazardous substances and waste, business licensing, animal protection, pest control and noise abatement.

You can call the Ministry hotline to report environmental damage, including spillage of hazardous substances, pollution of the sea or coastline, abnormal air pollution, spillage of hazardous waste in public places, and animal abuse.

24-Hour Environmental Center Hotline
*6911 or 1222 - 6911

The Ministry maintains a network of Animal Welfare Volunteers throughout the country. Volunteers work to prevent cruelty to animals, rescue animals in distress, engage in public information activities, and work for various animal welfare organizations.

An Animal Welfare Volunteer has the following authority:

- To request identification from anyone seen to violate the Animal Welfare Law for the purposes of submitting a report;
- To alert an animal welfare supervisor or police officer for assistance in preventing an offense under the Animal Welfare Law or in stopping an offense in progress;
- To present a report on a violation of the Animal Welfare Law and alert the relevant authorities if it is suspected that an offense has been committed or is anticipated.

Israeli citizens over the age of 16 can become an Animal Welfare Volunteer by downloading an application form from the Ministry Website (in Hebrew) or by contacting the Animal Welfare Division in one of the following ways:

- Telephone (02) 6495812/3
- E-mail: danag@sviva.gov.il
- Mail: Animal Welfare Division, Ministry of Environmental Protection, P.O.B 34033, Jerusalem 95464
- Fax: (02) 6495867

Your application must include your first and last name, identity number, date of birth, address, telephone number, occupation, and father's name. Once approved by the Israel Police, a certificate with your name and identity number, signed by the Minister of Environmental Protection, will be mailed to your home.



PAWS AND CONSIDER

Consumer Tips for Pet-Owners

- Like any other major investment, it is important to evaluate your needs before acquiring a pet. Consider the size of your apartment or house, the ages of your children, and the amount of time you can commit to an animal's care. Factor in food, supplies, and veterinary care. Big dogs are more expensive than little dogs. Short-haired breeds require less grooming than long-haired breeds. Cats require less expense and attention than dogs, followed by smaller pets such as hamsters and rabbits.
- Adopting a pet from an animal shelter is less expensive than purchasing from a pet store or breeder, and you could be saving an animal's life by doing so.
- Comparison shop for food and check prices at supermarkets and pet stores. Don't be shy about asking for a discount if you buy in bulk at pet stores.
- Most breeds of dogs don't need lots of new toys. If your dog is not playing with a toy it could be that he is bored with it. Put it away for a few weeks and then re-introduce it.
- Hamsters don't need fancy, expensive toys. They love to tunnel through and shred used cardboard rolls from paper towels and toilet paper.
- Ask yourself if the dog really needs a sweater, bandanna, etc. Is it to keep him warm and dry, or because it's just so darn cute? You can save money by making your own bandannas out of fabric remnants.
- Learn to groom your animal yourself. Brush a dog's teeth regularly to avoid costly cleaning by the vet.
- A sprinkle of baking soda is an inexpensive way to eliminate pet odors from litter boxes, carpets, etc.

**For more information about rabies, see the booklet entitled "Guarding your Health in Israel," available from the Publications Department. See the order form at the back.*



Keeping Kitty and Fido Happy and Healthy in Israel

- Israel has leash laws. Dog owners that do not leash their animals are liable to be fined. Apart from being illegal, failure to leash your pet is also dangerous; free-roaming animals are at the mercy of other creatures, including feral and rabid animals, as well as exposed to risks from traffic, poisons, and other hazards. It should be noted that the incidence of rabies in Israel has been climbing steadily since 1989.
- The law requires every dog over 3 months old to be licensed, be inserted with a microchip, and receive an annual vaccination against rabies. Rabies vaccinations are recommended, but not required, for cats.*
- During hot summer months, be sure that your pets have regular supplies of fresh, clean water.
- Keep bottles of water with you for your pets on long walks or trips.

P E T S A F E T Y



- Pets should have a cool, shady place to rest. Do not keep pets outside for prolonged periods during the hottest parts of the day, when there is a risk of dehydration and heat stroke.
- Hot pavements can burn dogs' paws; try to schedule walks during cooler parts of the day.
- Never leave a pet in a parked car, even for a short time, even if the windows are down. A car left standing in the sun can quickly heat up to temperatures of 40 degrees Centigrade (104 Fahrenheit) and higher, which can easily be fatal.
- Many plants are poisonous to pets and can cause severe illness and even death. Ask at your nursery or plant store before purchasing house and garden plants, and check with your local vet to find out if any neighborhood foliage could be harmful.
- Clipping a dog's or cat's fur in the summer can be harmful. Fur not only insulates against cold, but also keeps out heat and sun rays. Clipping an animal's coat can mean exposing sensitive skin to direct sunlight, risking burns and skin damage.
- Ceiling fans pose a danger to birds, and serious injuries can occur if a bird flies into one. Birds

can also become stressed by ceiling fans running near their cage.

- Keep Shabbat candles, Hanukkah menorahs and oil out of reach of pets. Don't give your pets wine.



Fleas and ticks are as much a nuisance in Israel as anywhere else. Commercial flea-collars are available in pet shops and hardware stores. You can also try these non-toxic, low-cost natural pest repellents.

- Slice one lemon into quarters and place in a bowl or jug. Cover the lemon with boiling water and let it steep overnight. Put the mixture into a spray bottle and gently spray the animal all over, enough to dampen the fur but not soak it.
- You can create an organic flea collar by rubbing eucalyptus oil, tea-tree oil, citronella oil, lavender oil or geranium oil onto the animal's collar or onto a neck bandanna.
- Be sure to launder your animal's bedding in hot water regularly.

SMART SHOPPING

Hot Choices

Your Guide to Cookware

Enter any housewares store, department store, or discount shop in Israel and you will be confronted with a large array of cookware of all types and quality. Some items may seem like real bargains while others appear to be outlandishly expensive. How can you know what is a hot deal, and what isn't worth the money?

Assess your needs before purchasing cookware. Do you cook every day or only once in a while? How many people do you cook for? Do you prepare foods from scratch or usually reheat take-out? What kinds of foods do you cook on a regular basis? Is most of your cooking on top of the stove, in the oven, or in the microwave? Your answers to these questions affect what you should purchase.

Materials

Cookware comes in a range of materials, including stainless steel, copper, aluminum, glass, iron, and ceramic, as well as plastics and silicon. Each type of material has pros and cons.

Copper

Many cooks prefer copper over other materials because it heats quickly and has excellent heat distribution. However copper can interact with some kinds of foods. If you are in the market for copper saucepans, look for designs with steel, tin, or nickel linings. The American Food and Drug Administration cautions against using unlined copper for general cooking because the metal can be dissolved by some foods and can cause illness in sufficient quantities. Acidic



foods can dissolve small amounts of the coating when cooked or stored for long periods. Coated copper cookware can lose its protective layer if scoured.

Aluminum

Aluminum is lightweight, durable, does not rust, and conducts heat well. However, aluminum can dissolve easily if a pot or pan is worn or pitted. The longer food is cooked or stored in aluminum, the greater the amount that gets into food. Leafy vegetables such as spinach, and acidic foods such as tomatoes and lemons absorb the most aluminum. Aluminum cookware should not be put in a dishwasher as this can cause oxidation. While the World Health Organization estimates that adults can consume approximately 50 milligrams of aluminum daily without harm, extremely worn or pitted aluminum pots generally should not be used.

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Anodized aluminum

Many consumers prefer to purchase cookware made of anodized aluminum. Anodization is an electrochemical process that thickens the outer layer that occurs naturally on aluminum. Without affecting aluminum's heat-conducting abilities, anodization hardens the metal, making it more scratch resistant, nonstick, and easier to clean. Anodization also helps to prevent leaching of aluminum into foods, particularly acidic foods such as sauces with tomato, wine, and lemon juice. Note, however, that many anodized aluminum products are not dishwasher-safe.

Stainless Steel

Stainless steel is strong, does not corrode, and does not react with acidic or alkaline ingredients such as tomato sauce. On the other hand, stainless steel does not conduct heat very well, so look for pots that have heat-conducting features such as aluminum or copper bottoms. Salts and salt-containing liquids can cause pitting if they are left in stainless-steel cookware. Some stainless steel cookware items contain other metals, including nickel and chromium, which can possibly leak into foods if your cookware becomes extremely pitted.

Black or Blue Steel

Black or blue steel is steel that has been heated to extremely high temperatures, causing a layer of oxidation to form on the surface of the metal. Black or blue steel offers quick and thorough heat distribution and fast cooking. Black and blue steel must be thoroughly dried and lightly oiled after use to prevent rust.

Carbon steel

Carbon steel cookware is strong and heat resistant. It can be quickly heated to high temperatures, but does not conduct the heat as well as other materials. It can be a good choice for items such as woks, where varying temperatures are maintained in the same pan.

Tinned steel

Tinned steel, which is steel treated with a coating of tin, transfers heat slowly and evenly, but can rust easily.

Cast Iron

Cast iron is durable and although slow to heat up, provides even heat distribution and retains heat for a long time following cooking. Iron is considered by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to be a healthy food additive, meaning that leaching of iron into foods does not generally present a health hazard and may even be beneficial. However, cast iron should not be used with highly acidic foods such as wine or tomatoes since they can chemically react with the iron. Enameled cast iron (cast iron with a porcelain coating) can help avoid the problem of chemical reactions. Cast iron needs to be 'seasoned' (coated with oil and heated) after each use or else the cookware may rust and food can stick to the surface. Be sure to follow manufacturer's instructions on 'seasoning' when you purchase cast-iron cookware.



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Nonstick Coatings

Nonstick coatings are applied to metal utensils to prevent food from sticking and to protect cookware surfaces. They are easy to clean and care for, and often require less fat or oil for cooking. Nonstick coatings tend to deteriorate over time, and must be treated with care. They can pose a risk if they are heated to very high temperatures, for example if an empty pan is left on the stove. In such situations, the coating can give off irritating or poisonous fumes. There is also a large body of evidence that cooking with nonstick pots and pans, even at regular cooking temperatures, can produce fumes that are harmful, or even fatal, to pet birds.

Plastic

Plastic is lightweight and nearly unbreakable. However, using plastic containers and wrap for anything other than their original purpose can cause health problems, especially if they are used at high temperatures, e.g. microwave cooking, or with fatty or oily foods such as

cheese and meat. Be sure to cook only with plastic wraps and cookware that are microwave-safe.

Silicone

Silicone has become a popular material for bakeware because it is nonstick, stain resistant, and able to withstand high temperatures. Silicone is not known to react with foods or liquids, or produce any hazardous fumes. However, you should not use silicone cookware on top of the stove or in the oven at temperatures above 220°C (428°F) because it can melt.

Glass and Ceramic

Glass and ceramic are popular materials for baking dishes and pans. They should only be used in the oven, since they can crack if used on top of the stove. It is important to be cautious when purchasing ceramic cookware and be certain that the glaze does not contain lead or other dangerous substances. Look for reliable brands that only manufacture ceramic-ware in locations that adhere to necessary safety standards.

WHAT'S ON THE SHELVES



Cookware Sets

Buying a matched set of cookware can often cost less than purchasing individual items. A matched set can also make organizing your kitchen easier. A good set of cookware should offer basic shapes and sizes so you can get maximum use from the smallest amount of equipment. But make sure that the set you are considering contains items that have a variety of functions and don't duplicate each other, for example sets with several sizes of the same kind of pan. Make sure you will be able to use each item of the set.

Pans

Pans are necessary both for baking and for roasting. Roasting pans are designed to expose food directly to the heat of the oven in order to create a brown exterior and a moist interior. Before purchasing a large pan, measure the inside of your oven. There should be at least two inches (5.08 centimeters) between the sides of the pan and the oven walls.

A good pan should be sturdy enough to handle the weight of the food without buckling, but should not be too heavy to lift and carry. Handles should be easy to grip. Try not to choose pans with inset handles or no handles at all.

Copper, anodized aluminum, tinned steel or stainless steel with a core of aluminum or copper are all good heat-conducting materials for roasting pans. Baking pans made of tempered glass or ceramic are suitable for roasting lighter foods such as fish or vegetables. However, they can crack if they are used on top of the stove, and in most cases the handles are not strong enough for bulky foods such as roast meats. High, covered roasting pans cook using steam rather than dry oven-heat, and are useful for roasting beef,

turkey, etc. A high-sided pan also intensifies the heat, cutting down on cooking time.

Covered roasting-dishes made of clay work on the principle of steam. A clay roaster should be soaked in water before use; during roasting the wet clay gives off steam in the oven, and helps to baste the food in its own juices.

Black steel and aluminum are popular choices for baking pans. Black steel conducts heat efficiently, browns food well, and results in thicker crusts. Aluminum most frequently produces even baking results. Stainless steel is less recommended for baking.

Glass baking pans are attractive for serving foods directly from the oven; however, glass often gets too hot and bakes too quickly, producing uneven results. Glass has the advantage of allowing you to see the bottom of pies, casseroles, etc. to check when they are done.

Nonstick baking pans are easy to clean, however they are prone to scratching. Nonstick bakeware also sometimes heats up too quickly, resulting in dried-out food.

Insulated bakeware consists of two sheets of aluminum, separated by a layer of air. Insulated cake pans and cookie sheets protect the bottoms of baked items from direct heat, reducing the likelihood of burning.

Saucepans

Saucepans are the work-horses of your kitchen, necessary for everything from boiled eggs to elegant sauces. But not every saucepan is designed for every job. Look for sturdy saucepans made of materials that conduct heat well. Flimsy pans will not cook food evenly and can result in burnt spots or ruined foods.

For making sauces, look for models with sloping or rounded sides, often called Windsor pans or sauciers, which provide for quicker evaporation than straight-sided pans and allow for easier stirring. Copper or stainless steel can be a good choice. If you choose stainless steel, look for an aluminum or copper core or disk on the bottom for good heat-conduction. Copper pans should be lined.

WHAT'S ON THE SHELVES

Nonstick saucepans work well for reheating foods, cooking plain vegetables and for sticky ingredients. However, they may not conduct heat as well as regular pans.

Soup Pots and Stockpots

Stockpots have sides at least as tall as their diameter, allowing stock to simmer for extended periods of time without too much evaporation. They are also useful for cooking spaghetti, corn on the cob, and similar foods. Soup pots are generally lower and wider. A good stockpot or soup pot should be made of a strong material that conducts heat well, such as stainless steel with an aluminum core or disk on the bottom, or anodized aluminum. Nonstick pots have the advantage of being easy to clean. Aluminum conducts heat well, and is lightweight, but can react with salty and acidic foods and become corroded. Look for stockpots and soup pots with a thick bottom to support the contents and prevent scorching.

Full pots can be very heavy; be sure to pick a model with handles that are large enough to grip and that are attached securely.



Frying Pans, Omelet Pans, and Skillets

Frying pans and skillets provide a large flat heating surface and shallow sides. A skillet is shallower than a frying pan, which has higher, slightly flared sides. Omelet pans have a slightly rounder bottom to make rolling and flipping eggs easier. Like other kinds of pots, frying pans should be made of materials that conduct heat well, such as lined copper, stainless-steel with an aluminum core, coated aluminum, or cast iron. Look for models with a handle that stays relatively cool during cooking.

Since copper both heats up and cools down rapidly, copper frying pans are useful for frying foods that need exact timing.

Cast iron cools down slowly when removed from heat,

WHAT'S ON THE SHELVES



making it a good choice for foods that you wish to keep hot until serving, such as pancakes.

Nonstick pans allow for easier cooking and cleaning, and require less fat or oil for cooking. On the other hand, nonstick pans do not conduct heat as efficiently as regular pans.

Woks are similar to frying pans, but are generally deeper, with wide, sloping sides. They are designed to allow a small amount of cooking oil to be heated to a high temperature while the outer areas keep food warm after frying. Choose a wok made from a good conductive metal such as carbon steel, cast iron or aluminum. Nonstick woks should have a base made of thick-gauge, heat-conducting materials. While used most often for stir-frying, woks are also useful for steaming, braising, and deep-frying. Be sure to follow the manufacturer's instructions on "seasoning" the wok to prevent rust and to reduce the amount of cooking oil needed.



Safety First! Remember:

- When shopping, look for cookware with handles that are comfortable and securely attached, and strong enough to hold the pot or pan easily. Lids should fit snugly and have knobs or handles that are large and easy to grip.
- Don't cook or store food for long periods of time in aluminum cookware.
- Do not use badly scratched or non-coated copper for cooking or food storage. Never scour coated copper cookware.
- Avoid nickel-plated cookware if you are allergic to nickel.
- Don't use stainless steel to store acidic foods such as cooked rhubarb or tomato sauce.
- Use caution when purchasing glazed ceramic bakeware and look for products from reputable brands.
- Don't use plastic containers or plastic wrap in the microwave unless they are specifically intended for microwave use.
- Avoid heating nonstick cookware to extreme temperatures. Keep pet birds far away from the kitchen during use.

HOW TO DEAL WITH HOUSEHOLD MOLD

There's a Fungus Among Us! And That's Not A Joke



The dictionary describes mold as group of fungal organisms. Most of us know it as that furry growth that spoils the cheese or leaves black stains on the bathroom walls. There are few Israeli homes that are immune, thanks to summer humidity and the cold and damp of the winter.

Molds can almost grow anywhere, indoors or outdoors, as long as there is enough surface moisture to keep them alive. Mold can grow on glass, tile, stainless steel, cookware, and other surfaces, feeding off of any organic matter deposited on the material (oils, dirt, skin cells, etc.). Mold also grows on surfaces such as wood, fabric, leather, paper, drywall, and stucco. More than just unsightly, mold can ruin items such as books and clothing, and even worse, can cause allergic reactions, breathing difficulties, headaches and other health problems ranging from moderate to severe. When it comes to mold, the best defense is offense.

Here's what to do:

- Repair leaky faucets, toilets, etc, as soon as you discover a problem.
- Be sure to seal window frames, cracks in the wall, and other sources of water seepage before the winter begins.
- Do not keep your windows closed all winter; open them whenever the weather permits in order to air out the house.
- In the summer, you can use small electric fans or ceiling fans to keep air circulating and discourage mold growth.
- Consider using special anti-mold paint in bathrooms, around windows, on exterior walls and anyplace else where dampness is a problem.
- Borax powder, a natural anti-mold agent, can be used in mold-prone areas, like the bottom of the garbage can. Add to water (1 tbsp to 2 cups warm water) to clean moldy areas. Also add 1/2 cup to your wash load in addition to your laundry detergent. Be sure to keep Borax powder out of the reach of children and pets.
- Vinegar can remove mold and moldy odors from clothes. Add three quarters of a cup of white vinegar to a load of wash. Repeat this process until all traces of mold are gone. Use detergent afterwards to thoroughly clean your clothes.
- Hydrogen peroxide can kill mold. Pour into a spray bottle and spray thoroughly on affected areas. Avoid spraying on colored fabric.
- Household bleach can be used to scrub mold off of surfaces such as bathroom tiles.
- Turn on the lights, and let sunshine into rooms. Light discourages mold growth.
- Don't put clothes back into drawers or closets immediately after wearing them. Let them "air-out" for a few hours first.
- Take wet towels and washcloths immediately to the laundry area. Hang them outside to dry if you have to postpone laundering.
- Change pet litter daily to reduce mold growth.
- Don't keep old newspapers, magazines, old carpets, pillows, etc.
- Squeegee the shower walls after showering or wipe down the walls with a towel or sponge.

SMART SHOPPING

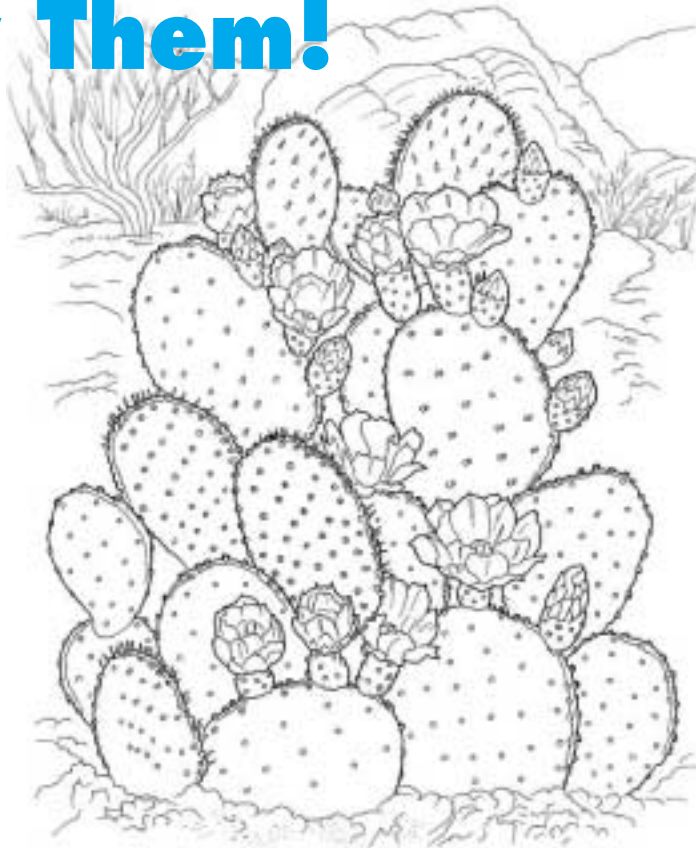
Sabra Fruits... Get to Know Them!

Everyone knows that native-born Israelis are called “sabras;” this is because, just like the cactus fruit of the same name, they are thorny on the outside, sweet on the inside.

Also known as the prickly pear, sabra fruits are a common sight in Israeli markets and shops, and are even sold fresh from the cactus by street vendors. Sabra fruits are a nutritious choice; one cup of sabra fruit has only 61 calories, no cholesterol, 83.4 milligrams of calcium, and 327.8 milligrams of potassium. Most of the fruit ripens within a short two-week period, typically in mid-July to mid-August. But, due to arid desert conditions in parts of Israel, they can be harvested ten months a year.

When purchasing, always choose a firm, unblemished fruit. Moldy spots are usually an indication of flesh that’s too soft and unappetizing. Very firm sabra fruits can be ripened at home.

To peel a sabra fruit, cut off the tips on either end of the fruit. Then slice the fruit, at skin depth, across the longest side and peel off the skin. You can eat them raw as a snack; they can also be used as a filling



or topping for desserts, tossed into salads, or used as garnish for chicken. The juice can be drunk on its own or mixed with other juices to make smoothies and shakes. They can be cooked into jams and preserves or cooked down into syrup as a base for jelly and candy.

Just for Fun

Try this fast and easy recipe for a Sabra Smoothie.

Peel three or four sabra fruits.

Cut into chunks, and put in the blender with half a cup of orange juice, a squeeze of lemon, and a little honey.

Puree the mix until it’s smooth, then strain out the seeds and chill or pour over crushed ice.

