



PODCAST EPISODE #2 – FULL TRANSCRIPT

Japanese Knives 101

Jon Broida, Japanese Knife Imports, Beverly Hills, CA



Host: Nickie Jurado: [00:00:00] You're listening to the Kitchen Scene Investigator podcast.

Host: Nickie Jurado: [00:00:24] Hi, loves welcome to kitchen scene investigator. I'm your host, Nickie Jurado.

Host: Nickie Jurado: [00:00:29] I created this podcast so I can be joined by friends and guests to investigate the worlds of food, wine and home, hospitality to give you the language and ways of the pros. This week's episode is really special. We are doing a

deep dive into Japanese knives. You know, good knives are fundamental to upping your culinary game. And as always, we will end with my favorite three questions. What are you drinking? What's making you happy and what's your favorite gift to give to a friend? But first, some housekeeping. Please subscribe and review the podcast. You can now find me on iTunes, Pod Bean and Google Play. It really helps the robots help the podcast get discovered. All right, on to Japanese knives. So, I learned firsthand working in the restaurant business and in cooking school that having the right gear for the job is really critical. And for me, at the top of that list are high quality knives. You know, it's for me, especially a chef's knife. But before that, I really only knew, like the German kind. The Wustoffs, the the Henkels. You know, that that Western, German stainless steel knife. But it was working with

chefs and professional kitchens where I was introduced to this amazing world of Japanese knives.

Guest: Jon Broida: [00:01:51] It's a lot of fun.

Host: Nickie Jurado: [00:01:52] It is a lot of fun. And I learned that investing in a high quality knife was exactly where it started. So when seeking out a great knife, like, where do you start? You know, for most of us, we're really at the mercy of a salesperson at Williams Sonoma, or bed, bath and Beyond. You know, while most of them. Yeah, they're well-intentioned, but a majority just they don't have like the depth of knowledge to guide you. Well, loves, I am here to be your advocate. And I'm thrilled that my industry friend John Broida at Japanese Knife Imports has opened up this amazingly gorgeous shop to help us investigate this world and slice and diced and break it down.

Guest: Jon Broida: [00:02:37] I'm so glad you guys are here today with us, too. It's really a lot of fun. I mean, we just met like a few days ago, but I feel like this was kind of destined to be.

Host: Nickie Jurado: [00:02:45] Thank you so much. Earlier, you gave me a tour of the shop. And by the way, guys, it is absolutely stunning and brimming with outstanding knives and accessories. If you're in Los Angeles, make it a point to stop by the shop. I mean, it's a treat to see true craftsmanship.

Guest: Jon Broida: [00:03:04] Thank you so much. I mean, we're used to the retail experience, so there's nothing wrong with that either.

Guest: Jon Broida: [00:03:10] I mean, a few seconds ago, you were saying that having a really high quality knife is the most important thing. And like of all the people in the world, I should be the one that should be telling people that. But the reality is, it's not actually what I believe. (Really?) Yes. I think that everything comes down to skill and technique first and foremost. Right. And so having nice tools is nice when the skill and technique is there to back it up. But if you're going to focus on one thing, it shouldn't be about buying stuff. It should be about focusing on how you're using things and what you understand about how stuff works. And once that's in place, yeah, having nice tools is great. I love Japanese knives. Obviously, I have a store that's geared towards that kind of stuff, but they're not always going to be the right fit for everyone. So a lot of what we do here that I think is substantially different for most retail experience. We take time to be introspective with art, with our customers, get a sense

of of what they're like, what works well for them, what they like, dislike, how they work, and then try and help people match together with something that fits for that for them.

Host: Nickie Jurado: [00:04:10] You know, making the choice to have a a store. And on top of that, a Japanese knife store seems like a really specialized decision.

Host: Nickie Jurado: [00:04:22] Yes. How did you go from. How did you get from Colorado to Japanese knives in Beverly Hills?

Guest: Jon Broida: [00:04:31] Yes. So I'm actually from L.A. originally. I was born and raised here and I love it here. I think L.A. is a wonderful city because of our multiculturalism. And and I think that that multiculturalism is what kind of took me on this path to begin with. So when I was in college, I decided I wanted to get a degree in Asian studies. I had my original game plan was Asian studies degree, combined business law degree and then go into consulting. And I realized that I didn't like the prospect of being stuck behind a desk. And so when I was in college, I over one break begged one of my friends that was a chef to let me come and hang out in his kitchen and see what it's all about. And I fell in love with cooking. Absolutely. Like they gave me the shittiest jobs to do. And I didn't care because I felt like doing something with your hands, really creating something, watching someone enjoy it and then, you know, wiping your hands and being done in calling it a day was a really special experience. And so I started going down this path of cooking and spent years doing mostly fine dining, but that Asian studies stuff was always there in the background. I always loved, honestly, Japanese food more than anything else. I think a lot of people get into Asian studies because they think like the anime is going to be cool or whatever. I don't care about that. I care about food. Food is the central thing in my life. And I thought like damn, their food is really tasty. I'll bet some other shit is pretty cool here too. And it kind of grew from there. And as I started cooking in every kitchen, I think you'll find that there are people that geek out on different things.

Host: Nickie Jurado: [00:05:55] Right.

Guest: Jon Broida: [00:05:55] There's always going to be that one guy that's like spoon obsessed, right? He's got like every spoon and vintage stuff. And then there's like the guys that are all technology obsessed and they have like the newest sous vide stuff or like, you know, gastro backed stuff like that. And then there's the knife guy. There's always one, at least one. And that was me. And I got obsessed. And my obsession grew over the years where I started spending literally all of my expendable income on knives and stones. And I

bought a bunch of stuff, try it all out, sell the stuff I didn't like. And with that money, buy more stuff. And it really, really took off for me. And so in starting this business, I was able to combine a lot of things that I didn't really expect to be able to combine. I get to spend all of my time around the chefs that I've always spent my time around. It's a world that I feel comfortable in. We talk about food probably more than anything else here. Honestly, like it's a knife store, we barely talk about knives. We spend a lot of time talking about what's going on in the industry, mental health, the new foods that are going on, all all that kind of stuff. And so this has really provided for for me a place to really enjoy a number of things that have been important to me in life. I get to talk about Japanese culture and history and teach people about culture and history, where I get to talk about tools and teach people about how to use and care for it and maintain those kinds of things. And most importantly, where I can continue my love of food and cooking.

Host: Nickie Jurado: [00:07:16] Yeah, I came to one of your events a few weeks ago and that is the one thing that stuck with me the most was the aspect of community that was happening, even though it was a book signing and it had a really clear purpose. The energy in the room was really palpable about it being community. And it was I felt so.

Guest: Jon Broida: [00:07:36] It just was really fun event.

Host: Nickie Jurado: [00:07:37] It really was a fun event. And I felt like, oh my God, I'm with my people. Yeah. So much fun.

Guest: Jon Broida: [00:07:43] And that's always what it should feel like. I think that the second you walk into any store and it feels like a place that's focused on selling you something, they've kind of missed the point of what it is. And so we never really tried to focus on on sales, but rather just on being a place where people feel comfortable and they can ask questions and talk about things and kind of explore naturally on their own. Not everyone's going to end up buying Japanese knives. And quite frankly, they're not always a good fit for everyone. And for those that it is a good fit for great, we got them covered. And for those that it's not a good fit for great, let's talk and figure out what is a good fit. And the the events are kind of another expression of that, where people come together and get to join together in something that binds us all. In that case, food or Yakitori. Sometimes it will be beer. Sometimes it be knives. Sometimes we'll be MMA, you know, like it's all over the place. L.A. is a weird place because we're such a spread out city. So in places like New York or San Francisco or Chicago, people do stuff together more often. Right? Like chefs will bring staff meal over to another restaurant and hang out or go out altogether at the end of the evening.

You don't see that much in L.A. because we often drive at the end of the night and everything is so spread out. And there aren't many places where people congregate, come together and enjoy in that community together. There's a few now Now Serving in Chinatown. I think is an excellent spot for that. We've always tried to be that kind of place.

Host: Nickie Jurado: [00:09:10] I just want to interject. Yeah, real quick. So for those of you out there that are not in L.A. Now Serving is a it's a gem and it's in Chinatown. And it's a bookstore that is not just a bookstore, but it functions as a community center. They that they just happened to sell great cookbooks. Right.

Guest: Jon Broida: [00:09:33] Well, Ken Ken comes from a similar background. You know, he he was a chef for Wolfgang Puck at CUT for years, but he comes from that same world of fine dining chef experience and. I think that he has a similar I mean, that I've known him for a long time also, and I remember like as they were getting started with the company, he has a really similar kind of mindset, which is that I need a place where I can still be, that I can still appreciate and embrace that side of me. And I want a place where other people can come and enjoy in that as well. And they've totally created that over there. And I think it's awesome there. There have been places over the years that hit those marks. So like a long, long time ago, there was the Sanctuary on Main Street in Venice and they were a spice vendor. In fact, they were predominantly at wholesale spice vendor that a lot of us used. But they built out this retail location where they had like the coolest plates and the new like El Bulli books and all the the coolest new technology that was happening. But what was best about the store was that there was a couch in the back with a coffee table and a bunch of books. And you could walk in there on any given day and there'd be like four or five chefs just kicking it, reading books and talking about what was going on and what what was at the market that Wednesday and what things they were trying to do or what was going on in some other city. And it brought together this community that I think is hard to bring together in L.A. because of how spread out we are, too.

Host: Nickie Jurado: [00:10:55] But one thing I noticed about, you know, whether it is Now Serving, whether it is sanctuary or your store, is that even with the sense of community, you have carved out a very unique and special business. And I'm I'm thankful that you were focusing on Japanese knives, because, you know, we are, we're used to seeing the German knives out there. And I was I was familiar with with all of those. And it wasn't until I got like my Grand Chef, TAKAYUKI. (Yeah, great knife) that you fixed that. What what I experienced with that first knife was it where had finesse? (Yeah). It had an edge and an elegant slicing that I was not experiencing, you know, with my other knives.

Guest: Jon Broida: [00:11:48] It speaks to what makes Japanese knives unique. Right. So like the main reason that people come to Japanese knives is that they're thinner and harder than their western counterparts. And there's other stuff going on with them as well. But those are the things that make a big difference for people initially without any knowledge or experience about something. When knives are thinner, they move through food with less resistance. Right. There's less wedging that occurs. Your knife doesn't get stuck. It's just a lot easier to cut. And as the steel gets harder, the knives are capable of holding more acute angles, which again feel sharper and holding those for a longer period of time. So you get a longer lasting edge. And those are real quantifiable things that people can appreciate and enjoy immediately. There's a whole bunch of other stuff that goes along with it. But I mean, those are the kinds of differences people notice and they use vocabulary like, oh, it feels great. The NSA ranted or effortless or, you know, whatever it might be. And it's a function of those specific things.

Host: Nickie Jurado: [00:12:40] And in doing my research, I feel like what I discovered is that there are very specific like you said, there's there's real there's true differences. (Yeah). But that there are there are real differences in in the different regions of Japan. (Sure). And the type of knives that they produce. And so I wanted to really enter this conversation with the intent of developing a shopping list or like a hit list of what you should know. And I really think we should start with the actual regions in Japan (Absolutely) and and appreciate the culture and the history. So talk to me a little bit about the major regions in Japan and what you can look for.

Guest: Jon Broida: [00:13:27] [ABOUT THE SEKI REGION] Yeah. So there there are a number of knife making regions and they all produce things a little bit differently. I think that the ones that we are most aware of happened to be SEKI, where things like Shun and Miyabi and MAC are produced. Seki has a history in sword making, but like in a much more commercial sense. So what they were able to do in Seki was take swords and produce them in larger quantities to prepare for battle a little bit more effectively. And they're they're taking that same kind of thought process mentality approach to making things and incorporate that into how they deal with knives now. So Seki produces more factory produced objects knives, which means that they are doing higher quantities of things. They'll make things in like batches of a thousand or two thousand or five thousand. And they're pretty consistent in doing that. What's cool about Seki is that they have a separation of work, I guess where where there's high specialization in certain areas.

Guest: Jon Broida: [00:14:27] So, for instance, in any given knife, there might be like eleven, twelve or even 20 companies involved in the production of that knife. And it's because there'll be a company that just makes the handle scales and then a company that just attaches the handle scales to the knife or a company that just welds on bolsters to a knife or a company that just specializes in heat treatment or company that just specializes in rough forging or grinding and and those will all come together to create one final product, but because they're doing the same thing over and over. They get to be hyper specialized in that one thing, and I think it makes them very effective in doing that. What's cool about knives from Seki is that they tend to be more affordable because they're produced in higher numbers. They have the economy of scale as an advantage. They're able to sell things at a at a somewhat lower price point. So that's I think the main thing that people see when they go to any store and buy Shun or Miyabi or any anything like that. Those are all produced in SEKI.

Guest: Jon Broida: [00:15:22] [ABOUT THE SAKAI REGION] Another major knife making region that we see a lot is SAKAI, which is near Osaka. (Sakai?) Yeah, they sound like really similar, right? It's a mess. I know people are like, this is Sakai. This is Seki. Which one is which? They they couldn't be more different from each other. In in Sakai things are produced predominantly by hand in painstaking labor intensive processes. They still do use what's called the Bungyo System, that kind of separation of of craft work Bungyo System.

Guest: Jon Broida: [00:15:53] So in in Sakai the system is a little bit more condensed. There's like a blacksmith that does the forging, heat treating and all that kind of metal work. Right. And then there's sharpener Hutsuke and that person takes that rough forge blade and grinds it into a much more knife looking like shape. And they go through and polish and shape it and they create something closer to what the final product will be. There's other companies that are involved. So there's handle makers. All they do is make the handles that go on the knives and sign makers, the people that make the sheets or the knives. And and where Sakai has kind of its big strength is that they have a system called the TONYA, the retailers or wholesalers, whose sole job is to arrange all of that stuff. This blacksmith, plus this sharpener, plus this handle maker and this engraver. You know, and what's cool about that is that you start to see a different philosophical approach to knife making where they're like, oh, maybe these aren't like the objectively greatest craftsman ever. But these two dudes, when they work together, there is a symbiosis there. And they're products that they produce are better that way. Or like these guys when they work together, these guys really need to do this kind of stuff together. If we're looking for a mirror polish, who do we use for that kind of stuff? And so there is this really.

Guest: Jon Broida: [00:17:11] Systematic approach to partnering and grouping things together that you see a lot in inside. There's one company in Sakai that does things a little bit different. Ashi Hamono they make for us our Gesshin Ginga series. So earlier I showed you like my favorite knife. They're the guys that make that and they just do things in a very non-standard way. So whereas in Sakai people normally have the separation, they do everything in-house on their own.

Guest: Jon Broida: [00:17:36] And whereas Sakai is well known for a single bevel blades like Kataba, kataba bocho these highly specialized blades for Japanese cooking, actually Ashi Hamono double beveled blades like a (cute?) or a (petit) or Sujo Heke that are generally more pertinent to the kind of cooking that we see in the West because we're not all doing like traditional Kaiseke Japanese cooking. We're doing like Italian food and French food and like, you know, whatever it is that we do, it's a wider variety of things.

Host: Nickie Jurado: [00:18:00] So it is the the double bevel conducive to more robust chopping and the?

Guest: Jon Broida: [00:18:08] Somewhat I think that they just operate differently.

Guest: Jon Broida: [00:18:11] The single bevel knives, it's not that they're like necessarily more delicate or anything like that, but they are so hyper focused and specialized in what it is that they do well. So like, for instance, DEBA, is a type of knife for fish butchery. It is awesome for fish butchery. It sucks at everything else. And so when people buy it, they're like, I'm going to use this to cut up chickens. Well, I mean, there's no like knife God that will come and smite you for that. But it's kind of stupid. Like, it's just not it's not the right tool for it. Like, I'm not going to, I don't know, take like a bird scooter and go over the Rocky Mountains. I like I'm going to get in the fucking car, you know? So you see you see a lot of that kind of stuff. Sometimes double-bevel knives, what what they are is that they tend to be a little bit more versatile in the sense that like a GYUTO the Japanese equivalent of chef's knife. Well, that's the thing that you could use for pretty much everything you want to do, aside from like bones, frozen foods, big seeds, you know, try not to cut like metal glass, but like, you know, for normal cooking, that's the kind of knife that you're going to want to have.

Host: Nickie Jurado: [00:19:13] And so you were talking about Seki,.

Guest: Jon Broida: [00:19:16] Right? Seki. And then Sakai, (Sakai). And now there's other regions.

Guest: Jon Broida: [00:19:20] (ABOUT THE TSUBAME/SANJO REGION) So another region that I really like is called SANJO is technically actually the TSUBAME/SANJO area. Japanese people tend to name like areas after the train stations, they're close by. So it's Tsubame and Sanjo right next to each other and they hate each other. But the train station is right in the middle. And so people just call it by Tsubame/Sanjo and then everyone's like, no, it should be Sanjo/Tsubame. And it's it's a whole mess. But in Sanjo, they do a lot more handmade goods. And unlike Sakai, where there's a separation of a blacksmith and a sharpener, people do everything all in-house in one place in Sanjo. And so you'll see craftsmen that do all the forging, grinding. Everything is a lot more labor intensive by hand. And I don't think that that necessarily means that the end result is a better product. It's just different. So a lot of figuring out like what knives are going to work for you is taking time to be introspective and hold stuff and feel stuff and think about how you work and then kind of match with that. But they do tend to do really, really beautiful, labor intensive handmade goods. They're gorgeous. Tsubame on the other hand, on the flip side of that is where things like Tojiro are produced. (And Tojiro is?), Tojiro is another brand, kind of like what you'll see from from Seki. So larger manufacturer making a predominantly Western handle, double bevel knives that are made in high quantities and relatively affordable.

Guest: Jon Broida: [00:20:38] So like one of the the main knives that a lot of people recommend when people are getting into Japanese knives is the TOJIRO DP series I don't carry here. I think it's a great knife. I just don't have a business relationship with them.

Guest: Jon Broida: [00:20:50] We kind of focus on on different things. But what's cool about it is that it's affordable, it's relatively tough and durable and it's widely available. And for a lot of people, those are important things as they get started with these kinds of knives.

Host: Nickie Jurado: [00:21:02] So tell me the name and the region again.

[00:21:04] So to TSUBAME is the area where they're doing the larger factory production stuff in NIIGATA, the prefecture that it's in. And SANJO is the area where they're doing more hand produced, labor intensive things like one brand that's out there. Shigefusa uh Izuka-san as well. I mean, he's pretty much retired now, so his sons are doing it. But he did everything really by hand.

Guest: Jon Broida: [00:21:28] Right. So like he's he's shaping the knives by hand, forging by hand all in one place. What I think is cool about that is that the craftsmen that work in this particular region have a really good overarching view of how everything fits together. Right. So like in Sakai, because things are separated, people tend to blame each other for stuff. Right. So like the sharpener, we'll get the Kijiji the rough forge blade from the blacksmith and they'll be like, oh, this is fucked up. This is some bullshit.

Guest: Jon Broida: [00:21:52] Like this knife is really messed up. This is the blacksmith's fault, right? And the blacksmith would be like, well, know that guy sucks at sharpening like it's that dude's fault. And there's this kind of like inter fighting that occurs there. And sometimes it's like serious. A lot of times it's just that people like talking shit to each other.

Guest: Jon Broida: [00:22:08] But in Sanjo because everything is happening all in one place. These guys have the ability to think like, OK, how am I going to grind this knife and then I'm going to forge it to make that part as easy as possible. What's the end result and what's the whole process that I can build to make that the best complete system? And it doesn't allow for them to have the same kind of hyper specialization in one area of their their field. But it gives them this kind of greater overarching view that I think is a great benefit. So they make some really, really cool stuff there.

Guest: Jon Broida: [00:22:38] [ABOUT THE ECHIZEN/TAKEFU REGION] And if we have some time later, I'll show you a few of the things from them, what else we got. So ECHIZEN is another knife making region that kind of fits smack dab in the middle between like Sanjo in Niigata and Seki in Gifu prefecture, Seki making the large factory production stuff. And Sanjo is doing everything by hand ECHIZEN fits kind of smack dab in the middle where they're producing things in higher quantities and they automate certain parts of the process. So like they use RIKIZAI or Sekuso pre pre laminated steels in bar or sheet form and they produce like two to three knives at a time as they're hammering things. So they get a lot of hand labor in there, but it's also producing stuff in higher quantity.

Guest: Jon Broida: [00:23:23] [ABOUT THE TOSA-YAMADA REGION] And then I guess the last region that's pretty common or that you see a lot of things coming from would be the TOSA-YAMADA region in TOSA-YAMADA region in Kochi prefecture. So there's an island just south of Honshu called Shikoku. There's four prefectures on there. And Kochi is the southern most of those and kind of up in the mountains just a little bit away from the coastline. There's an old knife making region where again, they had produced swords previously, but really their history was in forestry tools, axes, hatchets, outdoor knives, things

like that. And they are producing things in very cost effective ways because they're not spending as much time on it and finish in that kind of stuff. They produce things that are easy to use and relatively affordable. So that's one of the other major knife making regions we go to. And my love of that region is all about food, by the way, because they have the most delicious stuff down there. I want to go there. I don't even care about like visiting. I love visiting the night makers that I want to say I don't care about that because someone's going to hear this and yell at me. I want to go there, visit them, and then I want to eat a bunch of stuff.

Host: Nickie Jurado: [00:24:24] So that being said, I think it would be great if we start delineating like tips. Right? I'm ready to spend the money. I've made the decision that I'm going to invest in a knife. What are some aspects of design and ergonomics that a shopper should keep in mind?

Guest: Jon Broida: [00:24:41] (SHOPPING TIPS AND THE QUESTIONS YOU NEED TO ASK BEFORE BUYING A KNIFE) So I actually think it's important to start a little bit further back than that. And so there are a number of questions that I generally like to ask people to get a better sense of them first. And then from there we can kind of help them navigate what's gonna make the most sense. And so here are the kinds of things that I'd like to go through. The first thing that I want to know is what have people used previously? What brands, shapes, sizes, knives are they using right now? And then what do they like about them and what do they dislike about them? Are they too heavy or are they too light? Do they feel this way? What's the profile like? Do you like the stainless steel? Is it carbon steel? You get pissed about what's going on, right. So once we have a kind of baseline for where people are, what experience they have in terms of use and care and maintenance, what makes them happy, what makes them not happy. We have a good starting point where we can start to gear people towards things. We'll make a little bit more sense on that same note. And because people leave this out, I always ask them, what have you used previously that you may not own right now? Brands, shapes, sizes, what you like or dislike about those things, because in kitchens, sometimes you borrow people's knives, sometimes your co-worker has some stuff you like.

Guest: Jon Broida: [00:25:47] I wonder what that's like. And so you pick it up and use it. You see what's going on. Maybe you'd like that one, but you don't own it. So people don't think about it when I ask them the first question. It's also important to recognize. Do you sharpen your own knives? Do you not sharpen your knives? Are you interested in learning how to sharpen? Or is it not something that really interests you? Would you rather have someone

else do it or figure out some easy way to handle it? In general, I feel like I say this all day everyday. The more money that you spend on stuff, the more that ends up being required of you as an end user, skill wise, experience wise to use and care for and get the most out of it. So as you start to look at higher end knives, whether they're German knives or Japanese knives or from somewhere else, they're going to require sharpening. And with the less expensive knives, you have a little bit more flexibility because the steel might be softer than they might be more forgiving in terms of cross-sectional geometry or they're just less expensive.

Guest: Jon Broida: [00:26:37] (THE IMPORTANCE OF SHARPENING SKILLS AND TECHNIQUES) So you don't give a shit. Right, which is sometimes a helpful place to be. But as you get into the higher things, sharpening becomes a big part of it. Nothing stays sharp forever. We've got to sharpen. So I want to know, is that something that people are going to be interested in or not? And if so, are they going to be dorky about sharpening? Do they get into it like a hobby or is it a means to an end? Right. And this, again, will help me gauge what what is going to make the most sense. So once we figured out whether people will be into sharpening or not, we want to figure out what kind of cutting surface they're using. Are they cutting on glass cutting boards? Are they cutting on wood cutting boards? Are they cross grain or end grain are they using synthetic cutting boards. What that kind of work environment is like it a small space, a big space. Again, these things will help determine what needs to be appropriate. As we get into harder and thinner things, cutting surfaces matter a lot more.

Guest: Jon Broida: [00:27:23] (CONSIDERING YOUR SPACE AND ENVIRONMENT) Or you want to consider like how much space you're going to have, especially in a professional kitchen, you know, as your refrigeration unit, like right there at the end of unit break. Tip off your knife and you get a long knife or do you have more space? Same thing, I guess, for home cooks. Are you really want to think about the environment in which you're using stuff? I want to know if people have had shipping issues with their knives previously. Have they have they damaged their knives? If they broken tips up? They bent things. What's gone wrong? Right. Because that speaks to the way that people use things. It gives me a lot of insight with respect to the technique that they're using when they're when they're cutting, when they're caring for their knives, maintaining stuff. But it also helps me help them understand what kinds of things they can cut and how to cut those things more effectively. So it kind of leads into a conversation about cutting technique in general, which is important as you're getting into hiring things. So any shipping issues, any kind of damage, then then we want to know what kinds of things people cut.

Guest: Jon Broida: [00:28:14] (IMPACT OF ACIDIC FOODS ON YOUR KNIFE) Are you cutting high acidic foods or are you cutting really hard things? Really dense things, really soft things, things that are starchy or sticky? Or are they mostly proteins or are they bone in, bone out? Again, trying to get a sense of what is going to be the best fit for people if they cut things that are really tall and dense, sometimes they're going to want things there a little bit thinner because they move through those things more easily. But there are certain people that just are brutal with their knives and maybe their way of dealing with that is to get something that's thick and beastly and tough and durable where they just powered through stuff. Right. So trying to get a sense of that kind of stuff.

Host: Nickie Jurado: [00:28:47] (ON THE IMPORTANCE OF THE RIGHT KNIFE FOR THE RIGHT TASK) I think that's a really interesting point. Whether you are a cook at a Michelin star restaurant or you're a home cook in New Jersey, know what you're going to use your knife for going back to what I said at the top of the show, that the right the right gear for the job is absolutely mission critical. You have to be there, Lamborghini of gear, but you're not going to use a boning knife for you know, for butchery

Guest: Jon Broida: [00:29:13] You could just stupid, but you could. Nah, it's funny because I had a chef a long time ago in Italy and we had a lot of tourné vegetables on our menu. And I had a little like, you know, tourné knife I like a bird's beak paring knife. And I would sit and do the tourné. And then he would always grab like this ridiculous Gyuto, like a huge chef's knife. I think was like ten, eleven, twelve inches massive. And then he would tourné faster than me with that. And, you know, so again, skill and technique is first. Right. But it doesn't hurt to have things that that fit for what it is you're doing as as best you can. So after we figured out what kinds of things people are working with, we want to know, have you worked with carbon steel knives? Right. A lot of Japanese knives are carbon steel.

Host: Nickie Jurado: [00:29:59] Explain to me the difference between stainless steel and carbon steel?

Guest: Jon Broida: [00:30:03] (STAINLESS STEEL VS. CARBON STEEL) So it to be somewhat reductive about it. It's a function of chromium content in the in the metal. And so depending on the steel type, the amount of chromium necessary to be stainless will vary. But in general, people will say like 13 percent or above qualify something as stainless. There's a lot that goes into it. And it's not always true, but it's generally a good guideline. Stainless steel steels because they have chromium, have a layer of chromium oxide that forms and that

chromium oxide is passive, it's non reactive with acidic foods. And so that means that your knife is going to be less prone to rust, but more than that it's going to be less prone to reactivity with acidic foods. When you cut onions, tomatoes, garlic, lemons, 9th when you do that with a carbon steel blade. The the acidic foods react with the carbon steel and they oxidize. And so what happens is you see on the blade the formation of PATINA or discoloration. Right. But in the food you get what always happens with food when it oxidize is which is colour, taste and smell change. Its foods will start to turn brown or black and and taste and smell a little bit metallic sometimes. And so learning to work with carbon steels takes some time, takes a little bit of adjustment as you go through those kinds of things. But a lot of Japanese craftsmen are still working with carbon steel knives as a function of, I don't know, regional history or personal preference or whatever it might be.

Guest: Jon Broida: [00:31:29] (ON THE POPULARITY OF CARBON STEEL KNIVES) And the main reason that you'll see carbon steel knives be so popular is that they tend to sharpen more easily than stainless steel. They tend to get sharper than stainless steel knives. And in many cases, they hold their edge a little bit longer. There's modern stainless steel that are super cool in terms of like long lasting edges or getting really fine edges, carbon steels just due to a little bit more easily. And then being able to use carbon steels opens up a much wider variety of options for you with respect to the craftsman that are producing things. It's not it's not rocket science, by the way, like learning how to work with carbon steel, just learning the format within which you need to work and understanding the basic concepts of what's occurring when you use something like that.

Guest: Jon Broida: [00:32:07] (ON THE IMPACT OF ACIDIC FOODS ON CARBON STEEL KNIVES) So I want to know, do you have experience with that kind of stuff? And as a follow up to that, I want to know, do you cut a lot of acidic foods? Does that matter? Right. If you have a carbon steel knife in all you cut is acidic foods, that's going to suck. It's not going to be any fun. Just get a stainless steel knife. That's good. And you'll be fine if you cut just onions and garlic and lemon and lime all day. You could get a carbon steel knife, but you're probably better off getting a stainless steel make in that case. Right. So acidic foods.

Guest: Jon Broida: [00:32:35] I also want to know what kind of work environment. Are they a professional cook? Are they a home cook? Are they an accomplished home cook? You know, where do they stand with respect to their experience and work environment? Because that also dictates a lot of stuff. Home cooks have the benefit of being able to control time. Right.

Guest: Jon Broida: [00:32:50] (CONSIDERING YOUR ENVIRONMENT WHEN DECIDING ON WHAT KNIFE TO BUY) If they want to slow down the pace at which they're working, they can. There's no ticket waiting for them. There's no customers sitting at a table that's pissed off if they need to go slow and make sure they're using the best technique that they have that ability. But like a professional cook has to get shit done. Right. We're on a clock all the time. And so in a lot of cases, for people that aren't as dorky about knives, sometimes we want to give professional cooks towards things that don't require as much attention in the moment when they're in environments like that. Right. If they're in a fast paced environment like, say, Cheesecake Factory or TGIF. You know, a place where the guys go in and their machines, they just bang shit out all day and that's all they're doing. OK. We can't get them something that's like crazy, brittle or requires a lot of attention or care because they don't have time for that. And they might not be in a work environment where their co-workers appreciate or respect that. Right. Other people might grab your knives or use your stuff. So you really need to consider kind of step in in a more like fine dining experience. Maybe that's a little bit different. Maybe the pace is a little bit more controlled or you're working with other people that appreciate the tools in the same way that you do. So understanding your environment is also a big part of it. You know, is this a knife that's going to be in a vacation house, right? Or is it like your knife that you use every day? Do you have roommates? Does your significant other.

Host: Nickie Jurado: [00:34:04] What a good point. How many knives of mine have been ruined by my sisters..I still love you.

Guest: Jon Broida: [00:34:11] Right. Yeah. For me it's my parents. It's like those those are really important things to consider. I also want to know, do you. Do you think of yourself as a more finesse oriented person or are you more of like a get shit done kind of person when you cook? Right.

Host: Nickie Jurado: [00:34:26] Meaning do you are you more concerned about a gorgeous slice or you're just chopping...

Guest: Jon Broida: [00:34:32] (THE IMPACT OF HOW YOU WORK ON DECIDING WHAT KNIFE TO CHOOSE) Less and less that and more about like how you work? Right. There's people that work in a very meticulous and organized and focused way and everything that they do has purpose and is thought out. And then there's people that go and they're just like, I'm going to make some shit and, you know, like it comes together and it's nice. But the process in getting there is not the same. One guy might sit and do like a perfect brunoise and the other guy might like, you know, rough chop some shit and throw in a stockpot and call it a

day. And understanding that also helps helps us navigate, you know, do you want to go for things that are more brittle or do you want to just have something that you don't have to stress about quite as much? Right. It doesn't mean that you're going to have a bad night just because you don't want to sit and be a crazy person about care and maintenance. There's tons of good options. You just have to know that about yourself so that you can navigate those things more effectively.

Guest: Jon Broida: [00:35:22] (HOW MUCH TO SPEND AND VALUE KNIVES IN THE \$100 - \$250 RANGE) Then, of course, it's important to know where you want to be budget wise. You could spend shit tons of money on Japanese nights. You don't have to. You could spend a little bit of money and you can still get a great night. There's always a concept of diminishing returns as you get into cool, things like this. Right. And the more money you spend doesn't necessarily equate to equivalent jumps in performance. My, my experience is that sub one hundred dollar knives, there's some decent options, but there's not necessarily the greatest grouping of knives. That hundred, so let's say like 250 dollar range gives you I think what I would consider to be the best value for your dollar.

Host: Nickie Jurado: [00:35:59] So let's talk a little bit more about that, because I think that for listeners out there who are thinking, OK, I'm ready to invest, what should I expect to pay? So in that price range, the 150 to (like 100 to like 250 or so) 100 to two fifty.

Guest: Jon Broida: [00:36:16] You don't have to, though. I don't I don't want anyone to ever feel like I have to go in and spend this amount of money to get something that works well. Right.

Host: Nickie Jurado: [00:36:24] So for my listeners, my upwardly mobile professional listeners who are ready to invest in a knife in the 100 to two hundred and fifty dollar range. Like so. So what should they be looking for? So.

[00:36:38] (WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN THE \$100 - \$250 RANGE) The first thing I think that is important to consider is what people actually use. People have a tendency to go and buy way more shit than they actually need. You know, like they sell the block sets, it's like 50 knives and there's like the knife for playing this fish and then the knife or for laying that fish. And the people in reality, they use two knives more than anything else. Big knife, small knife. Keep it simple, right? You don't need a bunch of stuff. You always add other stuff later on. But the reality is that most people will use in their kitchen a big knife and a small knife and the big knife gets used the most. Right. If you start somewhere, you start with the big knife. In my

mind, what a big knife is, is anywhere from about 210 millimeters to about 270 millimeters, about eight and a quarter inches to ten and a half inches. And a chef's knife. Right. The chef's knife shape, which the Japanese people call it a GYUTO or WA GYUTO if it has a Japanese style handle, is the most versatile shape that you can get. And it will be the kind of knife that you can use on anything. Japanese knives, again, being thinner and harder are limiting in the sense that you don't use it on bones and frozen food. But like a German chefs knife, you can use to break down a chicken and then you can go and cut some garlic with it. The Japanese knives will be similar in the sense that you can use it to like work on protein and you can work on some vegetables and some fruit and whatever. Right. That's a versatile tool that will do the bulk of what you need to do.

Guest: Jon Broida: [00:37:58] (ON CHOOSING A BIG KNIFE) If you're someone that's intimidated by larger knives like you pick a chef's knife up, you're like, this is huge. Okay. Like maybe a Santoku who works well for you. I never recommend Santoku to professional cooks. It's a stupid size for a professional kitchen. The length is limited enough that you can't slice through even a single portion of protein without having to side it. You can't work with large foods effectively, like say you want to cut a watermelon in half and you have like a little SANTOKU you'd like cut part of the way through it and then you rotate the thing you finish the ,what is that, right, like just get a bigger knife and call it a day. For professional cooks, it's really important that they get used to that. We've been kind of fed all all these tidbits of, I want to say, misinformation over the years where people are like, oh, Santoku is like THE Japanese knife that you need. Santoku, a Japanese knife designed for home cooking in Japan. It's small because ingredients that people are working with are generally small. The space that people are working in is generally small and the kinds of cutting techniques are consistent in what they are doing.

Guest: Jon Broida: [00:38:57] It's like SENGIRI, which is like a Japanese equivalent of julienne is a really kind of common thing. The knife works really well for that kind of stuff. But is that what Western cooking looks like? Is that what our professional kitchens look like now? They look different. We need to make sure that we're picking things that work effectively for that. Lately, people have been moving towards smaller and smaller knives. And it is another thing that drives me nuts because like I wouldn't walk into a kitchen and see a buffalo grinder. Who knows what a buffalo grinder is? A buffalo grinder is like a big meat grinder, like the huge the huge ones. Right. And say you want to make like ground beef. You never used this thing before. As a professional cook. Do you just go like ham? Just going to stick with the kitchen aid attachment that I know, you know, and take like ten hours to do the same job that I can do in like ten minutes? No, you learn how to use the tool. Right. Like if I've never

cooked on a French top, I'm not going to just cook on regular burners because I don't know how to cook on French top, I'm going to learn how to cook on a French top. If you feel uncomfortable with large knives but they happen to be the right tool for the job, you learn how to use them. You get comfortable. You practice, you try. It's a really important part of the process.

Host: Nickie Jurado: [00:40:04] And to that point, I feel like when I was in culinary school, they gave me a 14 inch chef's knife. I mean, this knife was..

Guest: Jon Broida: [00:40:13] That might be a little bit excessive, but it's good to know how to use it.

Host: Nickie Jurado: [00:40:16] It took me it, John. It took me forever to master the confidence of standing there with this massive knife. (Yeah). And so I paired down to an 11 inch knife. And you know what? It still felt big. It was when I got my my my nine inch chef's knife where it felt right in my hand. And then I scaled back even more to a Santoku and to me, that gave me the the height of the blade that I needed with a manageable length. However,

Guest: Jon Broida: [00:40:49] But you're not a professional kitchens, right?

Host: Nickie Jurado: [00:40:51] Exactly.

Guest: Jon Broida: [00:40:52] It's a kind of different mindset.

Host: Nickie Jurado: [00:40:53] I mean, it's really important to know the like you were saying, the environment. (Yeah.) You're in. Know your environment and know the task at hand because let's say it's Thanksgiving and you have this gorgeous piece of protein. You're not going to hack at your you know, (with a you're little paring knife) with a little paring knife and (something in that). It's a really good perspective to have is the right knife for, you know, the right job. (Yeah). And so in that price range, you were saying, you know what you need and what are other things that you should be looking for in that range?

Guest: Jon Broida: [00:41:29] (ON CHOOSING A SMALL KNIFE) Yes. So I guess we talked about the big knife. The small knife in my mind is usually what Japanese people call a petit knife. I guess you would call it like utility knife. If it was the Western world that knives we're looking at, but it's something usually around like 120 to 150 millimeters, about like five

to six inches or so, a little bit larger than a paring knife. But the reason that I like this is the small knife is that it works well for enhance stuff. I want to peel something tournee, something I can do that. But it's also large enough where I can trim a chicken breast or take silver skin off of something or cut a sandwich in half. You people eat like cheese and salami and stuff that you can use the small knife for that kind of stuff. So the goal is that that balances out all the stuff that your big knife is maybe excessive or overkill for. And so you have those those two things. In terms of like brands, you know, it doesn't really matter that much. I think what's really important is that you start to think to yourself, do I need a stainless steel knife? Can I work with a carbon steel knife? Do I like things that are thin and hard? Do I want something that's a little bit thicker, maybe a little bit softer, more tough and durable is blade height. Important to me. So like, for instance, the Santoku worked well for you because you got a little bit additional blade height that matters. Some people don't care about that or prefer more narrow knives. Right. So you're kind of navigating that kind of thing.

Guest: Jon Broida: [00:42:44] (WHAT'S MOST IMPORTANT TO JON) Here's what's most important to me, and here's what I found matters the most to the customers that we deal with regularly. I think one thing that people instantly notice is that Japanese knives are a lot lighter than their Western counterparts. And so all of the sudden, these knives that might be a little bit larger feel more nimble because there's not as much weight. Right. She can pick up something that's larger and it doesn't feel unwieldy or overwhelming. And along with that, we always have to focus people on grips like how do you hold the knife where, you know, you do the pinching in the claw and all that kind of stuff. So I want people to hold stuff appropriately when they're testing this kind of stuff out, not just like grab the handle and be like, this feels huge. Hold stuff like you actually going to cook with it. Right.

Guest: Jon Broida: [00:43:23] (ON LIGHTNESS AND BALANCE) So the lightness in the knife matters. The balance of the knife is an interesting one. We have been told for years that we're looking for knives that are balanced at the bolster. That neutral balance is super good.

Host: Nickie Jurado: [00:43:32] What do you mean bolster?

Guest: Jon Broida: [00:43:33] (ABOUT THE BOLSTER OF A KNIFE) So the bolster is that big chunk of metal kind of where your handle and your your blade meet. And in German knives you'll see it's massive and it runs all the way from the spine down to the edge. But on Japanese knives tends to be a little bit small.

Host: Nickie Jurado: [00:43:46] Do you mean like right where your pointer finger goes?
Like,.

Guest: Jon Broida: [00:43:50] Yeah, like your thumb and your index finger would generally grip around that area. Yeah. It's that kind of chunky metal thing. Western handled knives from Japan are balanced a little bit more similar to to western knives in general in the sense that they they tend to be balanced closer to the bolster. Japanese style handle knives tend to be more forward heavy and the reason that they're forward heavy is that the handles are lighter. So the entire knife will be lighter overall, but because the handle is specifically lighter, the blades will have their balance be pushed a little bit more towards the tip of the blade. I like that. I think it's really, really important. So not only do I like that the Japanese style handles are lighter overall because it feels more nimble. They tend have more girth sewn up, the squeezing quite as tight when I'm holding stuff. Having a loose, relaxed grip is actually really important for good knife skills, but that forward balance is a game changer. All of a sudden when you're slicing stuff, the tip of the knife drops much more naturally. Right. That that motion is smooth, whereas when the balance point is towards the bowser, you hit this kind of equilibrium and you have to use a little bit tighter grip and a little bit more strength in your hand to complete cuts. The same thing happens when you when you're chopping vegetables or cutting vegetables with the balance point being positioned over the food. You don't have to use as tight grip to keep the tip of the knife down as you cut stuff so that that matters. That balance is important to me. Balance is a lot more about personal preference, though. So like if you feel uncomfortable with that kind of forward heavy balance, cool, get something else or you want something that's less forward, but just a little bit forward. Heavy. I mean, you'll figure out what works well for you. With respect to that. But that's my preference.

Guest: Jon Broida: [00:45:20] (ON CROSS SECTIONAL GEOMETRY) The other thing that I think is really important to pay attention to is cross-sectional geometry, how the knife tapers from the spine to the edge. Right. So what I mean by that is, is the knife thin as it comes down or is it a thicker knife? The thinner knives are what I like. And it's a large part of why people come to Japanese knives. That theater, the knife gets the less resistance there is when you cut especially tall, dense foods. So all of the sudden, your knife being stuck in like a carrot or a sweet potato is a thing of the past doesn't happen anymore. There's less displacement because the knife doesn't move as much stuff out of the way to cut through things. That's awesome.

Host: Nickie Jurado: [00:45:54] That's exactly the experience I had before I got my Japanese knife was so um I have Wustofs, I have Henkels and Globals. I just felt like my knife kept getting stuck in food and.

Guest: Jon Broida: [00:46:08] They do. They're designed to be thicker and more tough and durable.

Host: Nickie Jurado: [00:46:12] And you can have the best developed knife skills. But if a knife is too thick, it's going to get stuck in the food. It was soo frustrating. (Yeah). So transferring over to a Japanese knife for me was like liberating.

Guest: Jon Broida: [00:46:26] (ON SHARPNESS AND CROSS-SECTIONAL GEOMETRY) Right. It's a lot less effort required to cut stuff as well. So I think people people's experience of sharp actually has very little to do with what Sharp actually means. Like sharp the definition of. Like what makes something sharp is how acute the angle is at the edge of your knife and how refined it is, how clean it is. And I mean, it matters, right? Like the more acute angles you'll feel that and the more refined it is, you'll feel that. But it really only dictates what happens when the knife begins the cut. As soon as your knife is interacting with food in a greater sense, the sides of the knife are making contact. Cross-sectional geometry makes a difference. And so when people say like, oh, this feels sharp, more often than not, what they're experiencing is a function of cross sectional geometry. The thinner than I is, the the sharper the quotes sharper that it feels to them. And it's because it requires less effort to cut stuff. So cross-sectional geometry is important. And I recommend people to get something that's pretty thin, but not super thin when they're getting started, because the thinner that it gets, the more fragile or brittle it's going to be. Likewise, this deal gets harder, the more fragile, the brittle it ends up being. So we want to make sure that we're getting someone something that will cut significantly better than what they're using currently, but also isn't going to be something that they have to be scared to use. We're like they pick it up and it chips. You know, we want to have something that's not super, super thin but thin.

Host: Nickie Jurado: [00:47:43] So is it so is it ness not necessary to have the blade go all the way through the bolster?

Guest: Jon Broida: [00:47:50] It's not at all necessary to have the full tang or triple rivet thing. Is it stable and nice? Cool. Yeah, for sure. But Japanese style handles are not done that way. The wood the handle is is done in a mortise and tenon construction. There is a piece of wood and then a little chunk usually of water buffalo horn, but sometimes can be

plastic that fits around like a little nipple of wood. Again, mortise and tenon construction. And then we burn the tang into the wood, and it creates this kind of friction fit that keeps everything really, really tight on there and that's stable. And then what else is cool is that all the sudden handles are replaceable. So when your handle gets messed up on like German knife, you have to drill out the rivets, pull off the scales, put new scales on, shape the entire thing. With the Japanese style handle of the handle gets worn down, which they do over time or like a state goes through a dishwasher accident or God forbid. Right. It really messes stuff up. I can knock the handle off and put a new handle on.

Host: Nickie Jurado: [00:48:47] OK. Mind blown mind blown.

Guest: Jon Broida: [00:48:48] It's really I think it's a very convenient thing.

Host: Nickie Jurado: [00:48:50] So um my Japanese knife has rivets. So to think that I could save the knife if the handle got messed up.

Guest: Jon Broida: [00:49:00] I mean, you could do it with the Western handled knife to. It's just a more expensive and labor intensive process. You have to find someone that specializes in that kind of stuff.

Host: Nickie Jurado: [00:49:07] I, uh duh!.

Guest: Jon Broida: [00:49:09] But you know, again, like I like the Japanese style handles for all this stuff they're talking about, but also because they're lighter, because they have a little bit more girth to them, so I don't have to squeeze in quite as tight as any cook that's ever cooked professionally has like arthritic pain in their knuckles from just cutting tons of stuff and holding your knife all day long. The more relaxed you can keep your grip, the less of that that happens. And then also, I'm shallow. I like that they're symmetrical and they look really cool. So cool like that. I want stuff to look nice when I'm working with it.

Host: Nickie Jurado: [00:49:38] Those are such good, concrete, usable write right down, take to the store tips that I wish I had before I spent so much money on it on my knives. So I really appreciate you detailing that down. So in giving details about the knife, um Are there top line details about a cutting board? Because I mean, what are you going to do? Invest three hundred dollars on a knife and then five dollars on a board.

Guest: Jon Broida: [00:50:08] Right, it all. The whole thing has to come together. So just because I'd say this all day, every day. The more money that you spend, the more that's required of you skill wise experience. All that stuff makes a difference so as you get higher in knives cutting services matter.

[00:50:20] (ON CUTTING BOARDS + HI-SOFT BOARDS) There are a few cutting surfaces that I think are better and they all have different care and maintenance requirements and they're all at different price points. My favorite cutting board to use is a brand called HI-SOFT. Hi-Soft boards are polyvinyl acetate, essentially wood glue. But they're they look like rubber boards. They look like plastic boards, usually like tan or off white. They're really, really soft. And because they're really, really soft, they're really nice on your knife's edge. Right. They're not like it's not banging into something hard every time you cut something. Also, the surface of the cutting board is such that food doesn't slide around on it all the time. What sucks about them is that they're temperature sensitive, so you can't put really hot things on them and they require a lot of extra care and maintenance and they're also a little bit expensive. But the Hi-Soft boards I really love.

Guest: Jon Broida: [00:51:10] (ON END-GRAIN BOARDS) Another thing that I like our END GRAIN WOOD CUTTING BOARDS. Uh and I love end grain wood cutting boards because the grain running vertically is again nicer for your knife's edge. It wicks away moisture from the surface. So it actually ends up helping to kill bacteria in that way. And they look beautiful. But again, they're expensive. They can be heavy and they require some height in the sense that the boards. Good, good boards will generally be about 2 inches thick and will often have feet underneath them so that they're not sitting in water or anything like that, because they absorb so much that can warp, it gets messed up if they crack, so it it makes the board taller. Like my wife hates our end grain wood cutting board at home because like me, she's not particularly tall and it elevates stuff too much. And then also it's heavy and it's a pain in the ass to move around. So we use the Hi-Soft one because it's a little bit less tall and a little bit easier to move around.

Guest: Jon Broida: [00:51:59] (ON RUBBER GUM BOARDS) Another kind of board that I think is really nice is a RUBBER GUM BOARD and there's Japanese brands and make it like Asahi. There's also a U.S. made thing called Sani Tuff. The rubber gum boards are synthetic boards that are similar in density to woods. You get the same kind of performance that we get out of a wood board, but just easier care and maintenance. You know, if the oil it all the time, I think you can even throw those in the dishwasher. They're like super, super tough and durable kinds of boards. So I enjoy those.

Guest: Jon Broida: [00:52:26] (ON CROSS-GRAIN WOOD BOARDS) Kind of stepping down from there, you can get into the CROSS-GRAIN WOOD BOARDS, which are still nicer than the hard plastic boards that you see, but they're just not as nice as the end-grain wood cutting board. So those three things I think are really the best cutting boards that that one could get.

Host: Nickie Jurado: [00:52:41] (ON SHARPENING STONE) So we've talked about, you know, what to look for in a knife. We have some recommendations for boards. And finally, I want to briefly talk about sharpening stones. (Yeah), I I was introduced to to, you know, waterstones. And it took me a minute. It took me a minute to figure out how to use them. But if you're a first time Japanese knife buyer, what what type of green are you looking for in a water stone?

Guest: Jon Broida: [00:53:10] (TOP 5 THINGS IN A COMPLETE SHARPENING SET UP) So in a perfect world, money is no object. There are five things that you want in a complete sharpening setup.

[00:53:16] (COARSE STONE) Coarse stone is generally somewhere under eight hundred grit. Most of the time we'll use something that's around like 220 to like 600 grit. Obviously lower the number, the coarser of the stone is the course of the stone is the faster it cuts, but the deeper the scratches it leaves. Right. So coarse stones are used for major repairs, big chips, nicks thinning your knife down, serious metal removal. But every mistake that you make shows up much more quickly, much more severely. So it's not always the best place to get started.

[00:53:42] (MEDIUM GRIT STONE) You will want a MEDIUM GRIT STONE somewhere between usually eight hundred and two thousand grit. And that would be like your bread and butter, your daily stone, right. Should be fast enough to fix minor chips and nicks and leave you with an edge that should be more than adequate for anything you want to do in a kitchen. So if you had just one, that would be the stone.

Host: Nickie Jurado: [00:53:57] So that's eight hundred to two thousand.

Guest: Jon Broida: [00:53:59] Yeah. Somewhere in that range. Like a thousand grit stone. So you know, and it's like the numbers don't really matter as much as people think. They're like oh I need a thousand and then a fifteen hundred and a two thousand. Or like if I give a

thousand should also get a two thousand? Nah, just pick something in that range. You'd be good.

[00:54:13] And the third would be?.

[00:54:15] (FINISHING STONE) So the third would be a finishing stone, which is generally a higher grit stone. So that's usually from three thousand grit and up. But for kitchen knives, it's also important that we stick in a range that leaves an edge that's appropriate for kitchen use. You don't want to go too high. Too high is not great. Right. So usually we'll be somewhere between 3000 and 8000 feet. Often when I sharpen for my customers, I'm finishing around like three thousand six thousand grit. The higher you go, the more refined your edges, but the more that you lose the kind of microscopic teeth that develop along the edge. When you sharpens, you lose bite. And that matters when you cut thick skin foods like tomatoes, bell peppers, eggplant, you want a little bit more bite to your edge that the knife is in. And and so, again, that three thousand to eight thousand great range is it is a happy place to be. So those are the three stones.

Guest: Jon Broida: [00:54:59] (STONE FLATTENER) You will also need something to keep the stones flat, because as you use the stones, they wear, they dish. And it's very difficult to maintain a consistent angle on something that looks like a half pike, you'd have to literally dynamically adjust entirely through your sharpening process, keeping the angle consistent. It's impossible. So it's important that we have a flat surface on which we're sharpening. And so we have devices that we use to constantly flatten our stones and keep it that way. And in fact, you don't have to spend a lot of money on it. No matter what, you'll need something to keep the stone flat. But it could be like a nice flat section of the sidewalk outside, right. Dump some water in it, rub the stone and it call it a day. It's not the fastest, best solution, but it works. Right? Same for like wet/dry sandpaper. You go to a hardware store, pick up some 120 great wet/dry sandpaper with the grip facing up on a flat surface and rub the stone on it gets the job done.

Guest: Jon Broida: [00:55:45] (DIAMOND FLATTENING PLATES) I like to use DIAMOND FLATTENING PLATES because they're the fastest, easiest way for me to do stuff. But they also cost more money. And so for each person, they'll have to figure out, you know, where do I want to be budget wise and how important are these convenience factors to me? Everything is going to be a balance between convenience factors and budget, right? (Absolutely.).

Guest: Jon Broida: [00:56:01] (STONE HOLDER) So keeping the stone flat, you also need something to hold the stone in place. And again, it can be totally free, like a damp towel on the corner of your countertop or can be a fancy stone holder. I think I have like one hundred dollars with a crap holding my stone in place in the back. The purpose of holding this down in the place is so obvious. It's you don't want your stone sliding around when you're trying to sharpen. It seems pretty dangerous. Right. You also want something that will position you in a way where you have knuckle clearance when you're sharpening. So as a right handed person, I would work off the right hand corner of a countertop and that would leave my right hand over the floor with nothing underneath it as I'm sharpening. So I'm not scraping my knuckles along the countertop. Using the left hand side would be really difficult for me. Left handed people, left hand side works a little better. Or you can get a stone holding setup that provides height so you can sharpen anywhere because you get that extra height.

Guest: Jon Broida: [00:56:48] And so again, coarse stone, medium grit stone, finishing stone, something to hold it in place and something to keep it flat. If you had only one thing medium grit stone, something to hold in place and keep it flat because those those last two are necessary no matter what you do. So the medium grit stone is the only real necessary one. But when people are getting started, I often tell them get a medium grit stone and a finishing stone. And the reason for the finishing stone is that it makes the process of BURR REMOVAL a lot easier. And so as we're sharpening, that's a really important part of what we're doing to get a clean, stable edge that lasts a long time. Also, the refinement doesn't hurt and people like things that look shiny. So that works, too.

Host: Nickie Jurado: [00:57:23] Those are those are gems, diamonds of recommendations. And I really appreciate it because I remember really wanting to up my culinary game and going back to culinary school and just wanting to have the right equipment. And it took me forever to hunt down info. So, (yeah), I mean, I know that my listeners will love this information. So thank you.

Guest: Jon Broida: [00:57:47] I want to say one thing about sharpening really quick as well, because I struggled learning how to sharpen for a really long time in the beginning. And it turned out that the reason that I struggled is that I didn't understand the fundamental concepts of sharpening. So when we teach people about like how to use these stones now, our process of teaching is to start with fundamental concepts. People understand what's going on, the how and why behind stuff, learn how to recognize mistakes, see what they look like and then understand how to fix those. And so for for anyone that's looking, how to learn how to sharpen, we have a whole SERIES OF VIDEOS up on YouTube. So if you ever go to

our website and click on the MEDIA SECTION, the first thing that'll will come up is a KNIFE SHARPENING PLAYLIST. And I'm not telling you like, hey, do it at this angle with this number of strokes. I don't say any of that stuff. What I explained to you is how to think about sharpening, how to understand what's going on. Because once that makes sense, the rest is just practice and muscle memory. So please, please keep that in mind as you're thinking about what to find.

Host: Nickie Jurado: [00:58:43] So to find them so it's the Japanese knife imports YouTube page where those tutorials,.

Guest: Jon Broida: [00:58:47] You can find them absolutely on YouTube as well. (But on your website). Yeah. I mean, anyone that's been on a computer can probably find it pretty easily. But for me, I think the thing that's easiest is if you go to OUR WEBSTIE, which is W W WW DOT JAPANESE KNIFE IMPORTS DOT COM, you'll see that there is a menu near the top and there is a section that says MEDIA. If you click that, the first thing that will show up says KNIFE SHARPENING PLAYLIST And it's like 4 hours of everything you need to know about knife sharpening. You don't have to watch all those videos. That's excessive. But you'll go through and you'll see like one talks about how to hold a knife and other talks about like the basic movements of sharpening. There's a whole lecture on the fundamental concepts of sharpening double bevel knives and then another video that demonstrates what all of that stuff looks like. So you can kind of pick and choose the things that are going to be pertinent to what it is you're trying to accomplish. I know that media page, if you go down to the third set of videos there, there's a KNIFE SKILLS PLAYLIST, which I think is pretty cool. The first video is the only one that I shot, but that's the one where I talk to people about like body positioning grips, arm movement, how how to think about what's going on with your knife and then how to work with Japanese knives to avoid damaged them.

Guest: Jon Broida: [00:59:52] (3 THINGS THAT DAMAGE JAPANESE KNIVES THE MOST) So we minimize the three things that caused damage to Japanese knives the most HITTING REALLY HARD THINGS,, bones, frozen food, seeds, nuts, HITTING THINGS WITH EXCESSIVE FORCE like chefs, when we're cutting onions, for example, we tend to go pa, pa, pa, pa, really hard into the board, messes up your knife. You want to do it a little bit more gently. And the biggest thing is LATERAL FORCE EXERTED AGAINST THE EDGE. Any force that comes across the edge from the right or the left as opposed to against the edge, because the knives are so thin and hard, that lateral force is more prone to causing chipping, whereas on the softer, knives knives that are thicker, you'll see deformation.

Guest: Jon Broida: [01:00:26] (STAGES OF DAMAGE) Knives will always go through this process. I think any material will go through this process where you apply pressure against the first thing that you see is ELASTIC DEFORMATION, the knife will bend and come back. Then you see PLASTIC DEFORMATION the knife bends and stays and then you start to see DAMAGE fracturing, chipping, so on and so forth. With the knives being thinner and harder, that section of elastic and plastic deformation is a lot more narrow and the section for breaking is a lot wider. Whereas with German knives, that section for elastic and plastic deformation is a lot wider. But you always want to consider what's happening when you're applying lateral force against your edge. So as you're cutting, you want to make sure you're not scraping across things or twisting, rotating, moving from side to side, especially when you're cutting tall, dense foods. So those those are the kinds of things we talk about in that first video. And then there's a bunch of videos that talk about single-bevel knives, specifically how to use YANAGIBA for slicing sashimi, how to use Deba. And then there's like fish by fish by fish stuff that it's like how to break down Kampachi.

Host: Nickie Jurado: [01:01:23] That's one of the things I really loved about researching your business, is that you're not only a retail business, but you invest deeply.

Guest: Jon Broida: [01:01:31] I think we're barely retail business most days? I spend like all day teaching people and talking about things and then convincing them. Not to buy shit.

Host: Nickie Jurado: [01:01:38] I think that that that's what really makes your business unique, is you care more about developing the client, the customer, than actually putting a piece of product in their hands. And that's a rarity. That's a rarity.

Guest: Jon Broida: [01:01:54] I think it's part of the reason that some of us start your own businesses. Right. We want to be unapologetically ourselves and we don't want to compromise on our our moral values or integrity. And having this business allows me to do that every day since that best part of it. And I think that through teaching people, everything works out better. People are going to buy more knives. It's cool for me. Right. But not only that, they're going to be able to use and care for them better and get more enjoyment out of them. And as they get into higher things, they'll be more capable of using those things effectively. And so I would always prefer to not do stuff for people, but that rather be people's safety net. You want learn how to sharpen. I'll explain it to you. I don't want to do it for you. We can't. We have a sharpening service, but I'd rather you do it on your own. And then like when things get super fucked up, come bug me.

Host: Nickie Jurado: [01:02:43] (RAPID FIRE QUESTIONS - WHAT ARE YOU DRINKING, WHAT'S MAKING YOU HAPPY AND WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE GIFT) It's great. It's great. It's priceless. It's really priceless what you do and very unique what you do. And now I want to come to a part of the show that really talks about your uniqueness and your preferences and that and that's the three questions that I like to ask every guest. So I ask every guest, what are you drinking? And it doesn't have to be right this moment.

Guest: Jon Broida: [01:03:05] It's cool because I'm drinking this literally like every day right now, so to this is cool.

Host: Nickie Jurado: [01:03:10] So what are you drinking? What is making you happy in the culinary world? Or it could be in the world of Japanese nines. And what is your favorite gift to give a friend or colleague? So what are you drinking?

Guest: Jon Broida: [01:03:22] (WHAT JON IS DRINKING) So I drink a lot less alcohol nowadays, but I've been on this like cold brew tea kick for a minute and I found this awesome Moroccan mint tea that I have been making. I want to say every day for like six months now and it's just like instead of drinking water, I'll drink like three liters of this stuff every day. Just probably fucks up my caffeine levels a little bit, but tastes awesome and is very refreshing. Mint is awesome when it's hot outside so that I like wine too. I just really don't drink that much anymore.

Host: Nickie Jurado: [01:03:53] So what's making you happy in the culinary or knife world?

Guest: Jon Broida: [01:03:56] (WHAT'S MAKING JON HAPPY IN THE CULINARY WORLD) Ok, that's a little bit more complicated question. I think the thing that's most interesting to me that I'm most excited to see as we move forward are these ways that the culinary world is starting to bridge this pay gap between front and back and the ways that people are managing that. There is a huge disparity in the income from front of the house and back of the house. And it's it's crazy. And there's all kinds of fundamental issues that are causing this with respect to legislation and customer perception. I mean, it's a very loaded, complicated issue, but there's a few places that have figured out ways of managing that effectively. I don't think that they're like the end all be all of ways of managing it. Like SOMNI is a really great example, a because they'd make me really happy with the food they're doing. I think it's awesome. It's the kind of food that molecular gastronomy was. Aitor (Chef Aitor Zabala) is gonna be pissed at me when he hears me talk about this way, but that's the kind of food that molecular gastronomy was designed to be. People get all caught up in the

technique. Oh, use the trans glutamate for this. The gastric vac, blah, blah, blah. The whole purpose of this kind of food that like, you know, the Adria brothers were doing in the beginning was taking grandma food, you know, like the shit that your grandma made for you. And then kind of reconcepting it in a in a new way, approaching it with a kind of new paradigm, a new view. Alex Atala (Chef at D.O.M in Brazil) talks about a lot as well. But I think that they're doing that. But back to this pay disparity. What they've done is they've made the cooks, the servers. So you go in there and it's like a 10 seat counter and the cooks make the food and then they serve it to you and present it.

Guest: Jon Broida: [01:05:30] And what's cool about it is all the sudden they're eligible to be tipped out. And that's a large part of this pay disparity. But it forces them to do a whole number of other things that I think are really important thing. Cooks we're like pirates in the back, right? It's like a rowdy group of people. They're like cussing up a storm and, you know, it's being crazy. And now that they have to interact with customers, they learn how to speak and how to organize their thoughts and how to be professional and what it means to like take care of the way that you look and how you present yourself and not be on drugs or coming into work hangover or having like shit all over your chef's coat because you don't know how to work clean. Right. So it forces them into that kind of stuff, but it also allows them to make a livable wage for what they're doing. And it works well in the fine dining concepts. I don't know what to do about the other stuff. People just aren't prepared to deal with the true cost of food and the front of the house isn't willing to take the kind of pay cut that would be necessary to even things out a little bit. And I understand I understand that, but it's a complicated issue. So I think what the restaurants like that are doing is what makes me happier because it creates a better mental health environment for people, which is a tough part of our industry, it's still part of any industry and that it's made it possible for people to expand and grow as cooks in new ways. I love that.

Host: Nickie Jurado: [01:06:49] I've seen it firsthand. It's a very interesting conversation. Yeah. And finally, John, what is your favorite gift to give to friends or colleagues?

Guest: Jon Broida: [01:07:00] (PART I - JON'S FAVORITE GIFTS TO GIVE TO COLLEAGUES) I have a two part answer for that, because I spend a lot of time at restaurants and I used to bring bottles of alcohol for the kitchen. You show up with like a big bottle of bourbon or like a 30 rack of beer or something like that. And I always thought that was kind of fun. I wish more people did this right to appreciate the people that are in service to you bring some shit for them. Doesn't have to be something fancy, but it shows that you appreciate what they're doing. So my move now and this was not my idea. I forgot who told

me about this, but this is so genius is that I show up with like ice cream, not like a bucket of ice cream, but, you know, like ice cream truck ice cream, like the multicolored lollipops and like ice cream sandwiches and shit. Like who hates that? No one hates that. You show up in a hot kitchen and someone's got like a Klondike bar for you. It's the greatest thing in the world. So I've been doing that a lot lately where I'll show up with like, you know, rocket pops or like, you know, the little fruit, you know, ice pops or whatever. The little what are the tubes? The OTTER POPS. You know, you know which ones I'm talking about. So I love that. I think it's great because everyone enjoys it. It's it's not bad for you. It's not encouraging alcoholism, which is a fucked up part of our industry. And quite frankly, you're in a hot kitchen all day. What could be better than some delicious ice cream at the end of it? So I do that.

Guest: Jon Broida: [01:08:12] (PART II - JON'S FAVORITE GIFTS TO GIVE TO FRIENDS) And then in terms of my friends, I'm more about experiences than I am about things. I would rather take someone out for a dinner or take them to a bar or do something with them than to buy them something. And so that's kind of been my my move. I love introducing people to new restaurants that are opening and the chefs and especially the cooks so that they they understand more about this world that I love so much. So that's that's my answer to what I'd like to give to people.

Host: Nickie Jurado: [01:08:40] Thank you so much. That was hilarious and beautiful and insightful and just so personable. And that said so much about you and your business. (Thank you very much) It's so unique. And you put your heart and soul into it. And I'm just so grateful that you have spent so much time with us.

Guest: Jon Broida: [01:08:57] Really? It's been fun. Thank you for having me.

Host: Nickie Jurado: [01:09:00] This has been great. Let's let people know where they can find you. So your Web site and then...

Guest: Jon Broida: [01:09:05] So you can find our website at W W W DOT JAPANESE KNIFE IMPORTS DOT COM. I'm always accessible via email as well. So you can e-mail me at John J O N at Japanese knife imports dot com or you can come and visit us in Beverly Hills we're 8642 WILSHIRE BOULEVARD IN BEVERLY HILLS. Come and hang out with closed on Thursday. So please don't show up on a Thursday. But any other day, we're really easy going place. Come and have some tea with us or a beer or whatever. Talk about knives, fighting, ahhh who cares anything that you're into. We want to hear about it because it's that

kind. I always wanted this to be a place where people just feel comfortable being themselves. And so I hope that you guys will come visit us.

Host: Nickie Jurado: [01:09:44] I hope so, too, because folks, when you get to see the beauty and the finesse and the gorgeousness of this store, it is going to blow you away.

Host: Nickie Jurado: [01:09:54] (CLOSING) All right, folks, I hope you have enjoyed this as much as I have. It really has been insightful. And I you know, I went to culinary school and I feel like I've just learned tons of new information. And this brings us to the end of another episode of Kitchen Scene Investigator.

Host: Nickie Jurado: [01:10:14] Thanks for spending time with us. I will see you next time, BYE LUVS!