

2006 KITCHENWARE INNOVATIONS

Late each spring, the houseware and kitchenware industries host major exhibition trade shows around the country to highlight the newest and coolest must-have tools and equipment for home cooks and epicureans.

After trying some of the new items, I came up with my own list of new gadgets and gear for fit epicureans.

1 Bialetti Mokka Express (www.bialetticafe.com)
Add an element of whimsy and cheer to your morning routine with this 2006 Housewares Show "Best in Show Category" design winner: An updated version of an authentic street-vend Italian espresso maker. The first aluminum stovetop espresso coffee maker, the Moka Express, was designed and crafted in 1933 by Alfonso Bialetti. Within the span of a decade, it would be found in 90 percent of all Italian homes (as well as in the *Guisness Book of World Records*), changing forever the fundamental nature of Italian coffee culture. Constructed in Italy by Bialetti's enduring company, this first-of-its-kind dual espresso maker/milk frother is available in two versions featuring attractive and modern art designs—the whimsical "cow-inspired" design, and a more classic and elegant polished aluminum pot. Easy to use, it brews two cups of espresso or cappuccino in under five minutes. The polished aluminum pot is equipped with a special pressure valve that makes perfect froth every time. Works on gas, electric or ceramic cooktops. I recommend hand washing. \$89

2 Fit & Fresh™ Salad Shaker (www.vitaminder.com)
This nifty, one-serving salad keeper features an ice pack that snaps into the lid to keep lettuce crisp and dressings and toppings cool for up to six hours. The bowl holds four cups of salad. Dressing is stored in a separate compartment until ready to use. Just twist a dial and shake the salad dressing onto your salad. An additional compartment holds utensils or a nutrition bar. Its compact design makes it a snap for airline travel, work or school lunch, or simply for a make-ahead, eat-later salad. Other options: Fit & Fresh Fruit Lunch on the Go with built-in ice pack, plus freezable and microwavable fit-in containers, and Fit & Fresh Fresh Fruit and Veggie Bowl with built-in ice pack and removable dip compartment. \$10 each

THE FIT EPICUREAN

— Jo Ostgarden



3 Hamilton Beach® Party Crock® (www.hamilton-beach.com) Here's a slow cooker with the kind of flexibility every fit epicurean needs: an all-in-one prep, cooking, serving and storing pot/dish that performs as well as it looks. That means only one dish to clean from prep to reheating. Prepare side dishes, appetizers or dips directly in the detachable 1.5-quart pot and then refrigerate as needed. When it's time to heat, simply place the dish on the electric base. Two heat settings—low and high—make it ideal for meal timing. A cast-iron warming stand eliminates power cords at the table or sideboard, keeping food warm with the heat of a tea light. Candlelight illuminates through the warming stand's graceful, curved patterns, adding ambience. The red stoneware model features eastern-influenced lines like an inverted tagine. A pumpkin-shaped cast-iron model is also available. \$29.99



4 Kuhn Rikon Double Balloon Whisk (www.kuhnricon.com) This innovative whisk really works: It not only saves time but eases the effort. Extra working wires and added springiness in the head combine to create greater volume and speed than regular balloon whisks. Made in Switzerland, the sturdy stainless steel construction is ideal for a wide variety of whisking and aerating tasks (scrambled egg whites anyone?). Dishwasher safe. \$14



5 Pylones petit électroménager (www.pylones-usa.com) Oprah calls this toaster: "The most fun kitchen appliance ever, and maybe the most inventive since sliced bread." The eye-popping toaster, available in a wide array of arty patterns, images and colors, would've made Andy Warhol wake up for breakfast. It's a product of Pylones, a French design firm that's known for infusing eye candy colors and patterns onto all sorts of ordinary items like handbags, kitchen timers, combs, kitchen gadgets, pin boxes and lamps. This standard two-slice toaster (wide enough for sliced bagels) works like a regular toaster but the brightly checkered pattern will make even the worst morning grumps smile. Spring steel brackets on top allow you to float a bun or croissant over the top for warming. A knob controls the toasting time, and a small eject-button on the bottom lets you fine-tune the toasting cycle. \$60

