



MEHRAB JAMEE

From varsity and college freshers living in dorms to young professionals living on their own, most miss home-cooked meals. Having the dreaded cafeteria food served in hostel cafeterias may be a rite of passage for university students, but being compelled to eat this food day after day erodes one's soul.

Eating out every day could be an option. But in this economy? It makes sense once in a while, but eating out is always going to be a choice between your wallet and your health.

So now we're left with the last option: cooking for yourself. And yes, this will seem intimidating at first. Lucky for you, we've done the research, asked veterans for advice, and scoured e-commerce sites looking for appliances.

These five appliances feel like the best starter pack, considering the price-to-utility ratio. Buy two or three of these to get yourself started in terms of cooking, whilst preventing bankruptcy in the process.

Electric kettle

Besides preparing warm beverages, a lot of instant foods just need warm water to prepare. It can be used for boiling eggs and such as well.

There are different types of electric kettles. The ones on the cheaper end of the spectrum have a very low temperature fuse and are designed just for hot water. Try to go for the metal ones. Expensive water kettles cost around BDT 5,000 to 6,000. However, raising your budget a little, say by BDT 1,500 or 2,000, provides you with a more stable product and a bunch of different temperature settings.

These ones may be used to make some instant soup or even a passable *dudh cha*.

Multicooker or rice cookers

Rice cookers, multicookers, and crock-pots are known by different names. But this category of kitchen gadgets usually has a heat-conductive bowl with an electric heating mechanism. The easiest things to cook in this appliance are, therefore, rice, lentils, or soups.

However, these cookers can be used to cook so much more.

Most rice cookers on the market come with two or three different bowls. Steel bowls are for cooking rice or soups. Teflon-coated bowls function as an electric pot to cook different dishes. This writer has had many hostel feasts with his roommates featuring chicken or egg curry over *khichuri*, all cooked with this one gadget – probably the most multipurpose gadget on this list.

Prices go all the way up to BDT 10,000. The best options are the ones costing around BDT 2,000 to 3,000 with at least two bowls—a steel one and a Teflon one.

Induction cooker

Most hostel kids have induction cookers tucked in under their beds. Anything you can cook on a gas stove you can cook on this. The catch is you must buy flat-bottomed pots and pans that are fit for induction cookers.

Prices range from BDT 1,500 to 20,000 for triple-top ones. For most readers who are cooking for themselves or two people at most, an induction stove with a single cooktop with good temperature setting options costing around BDT 3,000 to 4,000 should suffice.

Sandwich maker

Don't think that sandwich makers are just for making sandwiches; think of them as Teflon-coated hot griddles. After lightly oiling the surface, your sandwich maker can be used to cook omelettes, toast bread or even cook sausages. It's a very time-efficient gadget for people in a hurry.

Prices for sandwich makers range from BDT 1,500 to 3,000. Pricier models have multiple moulds for making sandwiches, waffles, and even a flat-topped one for general usage.

Air fryer

An air fryer is, by design, a small convection oven with a heating element at the top or bottom and a tray to put your food in. You lightly brush any food item with some oil, and the hot air cooks the item in 10 to 20 minutes. Advertisements show mostly French fries, but an air fryer is the best device for the person planning to live on ready-to-cook packaged items you find in the frozen section at the grocery store, like *puris*, *samosas*, spring rolls, vegetable rolls, meatballs, and, of course, French fries and wedges.

All that being said, air fryers have a huge downside—they're expensive. Even the cheaper ones are going to set you back around BDT 4,000 or 5,000. If you have the budget, buy one that costs between BDT 7,000 and 8,000 from a trusted electronic brand.

Whilst deciding which appliance to buy, think of the kind of food you usually eat and think of the budget you have. Having two or three gadgets from this list will increase the variety of dishes you'll be able to cook for yourself.

Mehrab Jamee is a 5th-year medical student at Mugda Medical College and writes to keep himself sane.