

## How to Shop for Green Cookware

**Many cooking wares claim to be green, but how can you tell which ones are green and which ones are greenwashing?**



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[Greenwashing](#) can be problematic. The word green can mean many things. Take Crocs for example. People have called [Crocs](#) a green product because they are vegan, or free of animal by-products. Yet, the shoes are made out of petroleum products and are hard to recycle. [Crocs has a decent recycle-for-charity program](#), but I wouldn't say that the shoes are green. They are socially responsible, not green.

I wrote a few articles about cooking wares recently. I wanted to discover which [cookware was the healthiest](#), the [most energy efficient](#) and if any [cookware should be avoided due to health reasons](#). Being energy efficient doesn't make a pan green. Glass cookware may help a meal cook faster, but if the company that makes the glass cookware dumps all their trash in the river, it is hardly green cookware. There are a lot of companies coming out of the woodwork making pans and claiming to be green. How can you find out which ones are actually green and which ones are actually greenwashing?

### **The two most important things to take into account when shopping for green cookware.**

#### **Materials**

What is the pan made of? A pan that is made of recycled materials is a lot greener than a pan that uses virgin metals. Who mined those materials? How far did they travel before they were manufactured into a new pan? Most cookware is made out of metal and glass. These are some the easiest things to recycle. A company that reuses materials is a company that shows that it cares about the environment.

#### **Manufacturing and Distribution**

How is the pan made? How is it distributed? Do they employ biodiesel trucks or ship their product by rail? How is the cookware factory powered? Are windmills and solar panels employed? Does the company take steps to reduce their carbon footprint? Do they buy carbon offsets? A company that reduces its carbon footprint through responsible transportation and manufacturing is a company worth buying from.

### **Here are two lesser things to think about when shopping for green cookware.**

#### **Energy Efficiency**

Using glass or copper cookware is a great way to reduce your own carbon footprint. It reduces the amount of time you have to power your stove. Your stove isn't a huge player in your home's overall energy consumption. Your heating and cooling systems are the largest power users. The amount of energy saved by using energy-efficient cookware is not as important as how the pan was made and what it was made from. Energy-efficient cookware is still a viable way to go green around the home. But it shouldn't be your top priority.

#### **Health**

Most brand-new cookware is relatively healthy. Damaged cooking surfaces can cause a

few health problems. Recycle aluminum, copper and steel pans that have scratched up cooking surfaces. The metal can leach into your food and get you sick. Also, [Teflon-coated pans](#) are a bit of a conundrum. At high enough temperatures, Teflon will release a gas that can kill birds and give people flu-like symptoms. The temperatures at which the symptoms are caused are so high, however, that the heat is more likely to cause a fire than to kill your pet bird. (**NOTE:** Don't put a birdcage over stove!) Still, many people are anti-Teflon and refuse to eat from it because of this. That's fine. There are a lot of no-risk alternatives on the market.

Cast-iron and waterless cookware can have health benefits when used. Healthy cookware doesn't make it green cookware. It just makes it healthy.

Here are some examples of how someone could shop for green cookware:

**Martha Stewart's [GreenPan™](#):**

This company makes its pans from a substance called Thermolon, a non-stick alternative to Teflon. The process of making Thermolon uses less carbon emissions than the process of making [Teflon](#). Does this make GreenPan green? It depends. Does GreenPan consider itself green because it takes less CO<sub>2</sub> to make than Teflon? Or do they really attempt to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions overall? The GreenPan website is unclear. You could drive a Hummer all day and call yourself green because you don't commute in an airplane, but that's obviously not green. Hopefully, GreenPan will make this claim more clear. As a consumer, I would ask them for more information before deciding whether or not to purchase their product.

**StarFrit**

[The Starfrit line of cookware](#) is offered exclusively through Wal-Mart. It's made out of 99% recycled aluminum, and it's labeled with recycled paper. It also uses a non-Teflon coating and is energy efficient when used at home. I found little information about their manufacturing practices, but Starfrit has hit on 3/4 of the important issues. If I needed a pan today, this would be the pan that I bought. However, I may request information from the company about their manufacturing process.

You get the point, right? What makes these cooking wares environmentally sound is the way they are manufactured and not that they save a negligible—when compared to the cookware's production—amount of energy on your stove.

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