
AFTERTASTE

JACK'S CHOPPERS

Jack Musnicki, a nurseryman and former potato farmer in Bridgehampton, is fond of tools—pig-scrapers, handheld corn-seeders, blubber knives—that aren't much made anymore. They aren't much used anymore either. Although that doesn't mean they aren't functional. Consider his wall of nearly 80 food choppers.

"I use all of those on the wall. I probably use one every day," said Musnicki. "On parsley or chives or on garlic I use them. I might use three or four of them in the course of cooking a meal." The shape and size of the blade fits different sized bowls—a small, deep bowl calls for a small, heavily curved blade. "Some of the big ones are perfect for doing big tomatoes," said Musnicki, who acquired the blades over the years at local yard sales and antique shops. Nearly all are handwrought iron, and Musnicki suspects most of his collection date to the 19th century, a time when a local blacksmith still existed, and when "if you needed it, you made it." Blades mounted directly on a cutting board (like the one shown here dicing parsley) were also once common.

As for the results, some who have sampled from this kitchen would say that the careful work of metal on wood puts a Cuisinart to shame.