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Nonstick Nirvana, Without Toxic Risks

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Living

And now, a small confession from a cook: I have finally acquired a “green” nonstick pan.

As a devoted home chef, I spend hours in the kitchen each week experimenting with recipes, sautéing this, poaching that. The more experienced you become behind the stove, the more you begin to grasp the value of having high-quality instruments at your disposal. Over the years, I indulged in a few pricey additions like a Le Creuset dutch oven and Messermeister knives.

However, my nonstick pans have always been an afterthought. I bought decent ones, but I did not expect them to last. I used my Teflon frying pan for many tasks, but later began eyeing it with high suspicion after the Environmental Protection Agency noted in a draft report that perfluorooctanoic acid, or PFOA, a synthetic chemical used in the manufacture of coatings for nonstick cookware like Teflon, had been associated with tumors in laboratory animals. In 2006 the agency asked manufacturers to set a goal of eliminating PFOA use by 2015.

After that I tried to minimize usage. At the first sign of flaking (and there is always eventually flaking), I worried about what we could be ingesting.

But recently my husband bought me a pan coated in textured ceramic. It is promoted as green because it is made completely without PFOAs or other toxic chemicals, according to the manufacturer. Fab.

But I also love the way the pan feels and performs. Not only does it easily wipe clean of even foods like scrambled eggs with American



cheese (no, I don't make this — my 9-year-old son does), but when I need to brown something, it leaves behind enough bits to make a nice sauce. The weight in my hand is very satisfying, too.

I've only had the pan for two months, so I can't speak to flaking yet, but a ceramic coating is supposed to last longer than Teflon. We will see!

An earlier version of this post referred to PFOAs as a known carcinogen. While the E.P.A.'s independent Science Advisory Board has suggested that, given its review of the science, that PFOAs are “likely to be carcinogenic to humans,” the E.P.A.'s formal risk assessment of the chemical — which will address the question of whether this chemical is carcinogenic to humans — has not been completed. ☹