

Blender

1996–2007

by Wendy Ju

My husband and I recently retired our Hamilton Beach 10-Speed blender. It had dutifully served us for over 10 years until, a few months ago, the plastic base ring to the jar cracked and started leaking. The cost of replacing the ring would have been as much as buying a new blender, and so, naturally, we have a new blender...yet I find myself reluctant to move on. The new blender has only recently been allowed to sit on the counter where the old one sat. I still feel pangs of betrayal when I look at it.

Our old blender was cheap. I think it cost \$18—definitely no more than \$25. It was the first thing that Justin, my now-husband, and I purchased together, and had I realized what sentimental value would be later invested into it, I probably would have chosen something more deserving of my devotion. Its jar is made of plastic that has gone almost opaque from constant use and abuse. It is incredibly loud, even on its slowest setting. Its base isn't quite heavy enough, so I often would use both hands to hold it down while it did its thing. When Justin and I first moved in together, this blender perfectly fit our nomadic, post-college ethos, a type of do-it-yourself-with-just-a-spoon-and-a-pocketknife minimalism.

I suppose some people just use their blenders to make the occasional margarita. In our kitchen, appliances that make only one thing are forbidden. The blender mixed soups, beat eggs, chopped nuts, crushed ice, mixed pancake batter, whipped mayonnaise, liquefied fruit, and diced vegetables. It even cleaned itself; I would fill the jar with soapy water and use its blending power to do the work. It's possible that any of these tasks could have been performed more optimally with some other tool, but even after our friends had graduated to fancier food processors and hand mixers, we continued to use our blender for everything. Its outsized ambition, spelled out in the fancy titles ("PULVERIZE!" "WHIP!" "PUREE!") bestowed upon what are just its different speeds of rotation, seemed to represent our own desire to take the world by storm with little but our good educations and boundless enthusiasm.

We splurged when replacing the old blender, spending \$75—\$75!—on a shiny chrome Osterizer. I calculated that we used the blender often enough that it was maybe worth "investing" in something that had a sturdy glass jar and a heavy base, something that I would not be embarrassed to admit was the kitchen appliance I use most. It has a classic look, more like something that would serve us in good stead for 11 years. And yet we still keep our old, broken Hamilton Beach around, hiding in our cupboard, even though it doesn't make a single thing any more. It is a happy reminder of where we have come from, of our belief that the recipe for success is not so much an arsenal of fancy shiny equipment, but simple knowledge of how to apply basic tools. 🖐️

