Refractometers have come down significantly in price. A quick search for "Brix refractometer" on eBay turns up many results that you can land for around $40. Make sure to get one with at least 0-32%. Furthermore, it is worth grabbing one with ATC (automatic temperature compensation). If you have ever used one of these you know how handy they are for quick determination of sugar content. For all-grain brewing, it is extremely easy to monitor the specific gravity of your run-off during sparge to see when you should be stopping. For a measurement you only use a few drops. For wine-making you can get great estimates during crush (make sure do sample enough berries though). The one downside to refractometers is that once alcohol is introduced to the mix, they aren't effective so you still need a hydrometer for that. However, there is a way to use a spreadsheet to adjust for alcohol in your beer. Look for another tip about that!