

BUYERS' GUIDE BARBECUES

Planning on spending the summer outdoors sizzling sausages and grilling burgers? Here's all you need to know before hosting your ideal cookout

Words: Yvette Murrell

With British summers, you can never be too sure when you'll be able to dine outside – but you can be prepared by having the right equipment. When those coveted sunny days do come along, a decent barbecue is essential. Often referred to as the barbie, BBQ, grill or South African braai, they have come a long way from the humble concept of cooking food over fire outdoors to today's multi-functional, often chef-worthy designs.

Buying tips

Think about who you are cooking for to narrow down your search. A two-ring gas burner or a charcoal grill measuring around 2000sq cm should feed a family of up to six and you can find both smaller and larger products to suit. Next, decide on gas or charcoal. Generally, gas barbecues tend to be larger, heavier, and harder to move, therefore will need a protective cover rather than being wheeled into the shed come winter. They are much quicker to heat up, too, maintain temperature well, and are easier to clean compared to charcoal grills, which are considered more traditional. They give food an authentic smoky flavour and tend to cost less, but take longer to heat up and the leftover ash can be messy.

Design decisions

The main feature is the grill, so choose a quality one. Cast iron is a good material to look out for – it holds heat well and can withstand the elements. It often comes as porcelain coated which makes it non-porous so food won't stick and it won't catch rust as easily; stainless and porcelain-coated steel are also available. Consider lids or hoods for protection and heating, storage such as shelves or hooks for utensils, and side burners to keep food warm once cooked. Griddles allow you to fry up what would otherwise slip through the grill spokes, such as vegetables or eggs. Temperature gauges are useful for ensuring food is cooked well, while handles and castors are helpful for occasionally manoeuvring your grill.

Need to know

To ensure longevity, check with the manufacturer or retailer how you need to store your barbecue – whether that be under a cover or put away completely. Thoroughly clean it after each use with a bristled brush and warm, soapy water. Keep an eye out for brands with decent warranties – many offer up to 10 years for all parts.

Pricing

For a good-quality barbecue – we're not talking disposables here – expect to pay upwards of £150. Additional accessories will increase the overall cost, plus coals and gas canisters are sold separately. **KBB**



↑ Homebase's Texas Nimbus two-burner gas BBQ, £159, can cook up to 20 burgers at a time and features a porcelain steel wire cooking grill and warming rack.



→ Featuring a handy side shelf and hooks to store utensils, the Outback Ranger three-burner barbecue costs £429, Dobbies.

"As a safety measure, it is best to place your barbecue on a flat surface and away from any trees. Ideally, it should also not be located too far away from your kitchen, to save you from having to dash across the garden every time you need to go to the fridge or sink."
Elinor,
editorial assistant



↑ Weber's Master-Touch GBS E-5755 57cm charcoal barbecue, £299, has a built-in one-touch cleaning system to help remove ash and grease after each use.



The Rockwell 400 gas barbecue, £325 from B&Q, has an integrated ignition for simple lighting and can cook for up to 16 people.

↓ Char-broil's Professional 4600 has two separate fireboxes and lids – ideal if you want to cook meat on one side and fish or vegetarian options on the other. Priced £899.99.

→ With porcelain-coated cast iron grills and a convenient drip tray, the John Lewis & Partners three-burner gas BBQ in silver and black, priced £249, can cook food for up to six people.



→ By Heston Blumenthal, the Everdure 4K charcoal barbecue features an airflow control system that helps adjust temperature of the grill. Available in orange or graphite, priced around £1795.



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