



# Stars of our pies

Aldi and Netto triumph over Harrods in our festive showdown

**O**liver Cromwell so hated mince pies he is said to have passed a law in 1657 making it illegal to eat them on Christmas Day.

Fortunately for mince pie lovers, the Law Commission has assured us that if such a law existed, it has long since been wiped from the statute book. So you can tuck in to our six Best Buy mince pies over

the festive period without fearing a knock on the door from the law.

## A slice of history

Back in Cromwell's day, it took a healthy appetite to eat what was then known as 'Christmas Pye'. The pie was a large dish filled with a variety of chopped meats including pigeon, pheasant, rabbit, mutton and liver. As if that wasn't

enough, this was all mixed with fruits, peel and sugar.

The all-fruit affairs we enjoy today come in a bewildering range from organic to luxury, deep-filled, mini, iced, with pastry top, without, and so on.

We decided to taste luxury ranges of pies (well, it is Christmas) but the good news is the best ones needn't cost a fortune.

## Festive treats

While Marks & Spencer's pies (£2.29) take pride of place at our Christmas table, we found that those produced by budget stores Aldi and Netto were also Best Buys.

**Netto's pies (£1.19), were cheapest on test and rated more highly by our testers than Harrods' pies which cost five times more (£5.95).**



## How we test

In October, we tested 10 brands of luxury mince pies from major retailers who were able to supply them in time for our test.

We asked 150 people (a mix of occupations and ages) to test four of the 10 brands of pie, without knowing which was which.

Each pie was tasted by 60 people, the number

required by the International Standard for 'sensory tests', such as taste tests. All pies were tested at room temperature.

Testers rated how they liked the appearance, taste and aroma of each pie on a nine-point scale from 'dislike very much' to 'like very much'. We used the average of these scores to come up

with our star ratings. The testers also rated how much they liked each pie overall using the same scale. The overall % score for each pie is calculated in the same way as the star ratings.

To prevent the order that the four pies were tested in from influencing how much the pies were liked, a rotation system was used.





## 80% Marks & Spencer Luxury Deep Filled Mince Pies £2.29 for six

Taste ★★★★★ Aroma ★★★★★  
Appearance ★★★★★  
Alcohol YES

Suitable for vegetarians YES

Our winner gets good marks for taste and aroma and excellent for appearance, making it perfect for a party spread. Our testers liked the 'buttery taste' and the star on top is a nice Christmas touch.



## 77% Co-op Truly Irresistible Luxury All Butter Mince Pies £1.59 for six

Taste ★★★★★ Aroma ★★★★★  
Appearance ★★★★★  
Alcohol YES

Suitable for vegetarians YES

The taste and appearance of Co-op's pies was praised, with one tester calling the flavour 'perfect'. However, their aroma wasn't quite up to the standard of M&S' pies.



## 73% Netto Deep Filled Luxury Brandy Mince Pies £1.19 for six

Taste ★★★★★  
Aroma ★★★★★  
Appearance ★★★★★  
Alcohol YES

Suitable for vegetarians YES

Netto proves that cheap doesn't mean nasty. The cheapest pie on test puts many better-known, more expensive rivals to shame with good scores for taste and appearance. Its 'golden colour' was particularly popular.



## 72% Aldi Specially Selected Mince Pies £1.49 for six

Taste ★★★★★ Aroma ★★★★★  
Appearance ★★★★★  
Alcohol YES

Suitable for vegetarians YES

Aldi punches above its weight with a good-value pie that belies its ordinary appearance, giving a taste that testers described as 'buttery' and 'fruity'. One tester said they liked 'everything' about the pie, particularly the mincemeat and pastry.



## 76% Mr Kipling Deep Filled Mince Pies £1.49 for six

Taste ★★★★★ Aroma ★★★★★  
Appearance ★★★★★  
Alcohol NO

Suitable for vegetarians YES

A good choice for teetotallers, this pie is one of just two that contained no alcohol. The absence of Christmas spirit hasn't harmed its score. Its all-round appeal was perfectly captured by one tester who said it 'largely met my expectation of a mince pie'.



## 72% Tesco Finest Mince Pies £1.65 for six

Taste ★★★★★ Aroma ★★★★★  
Appearance ★★★★★  
Alcohol YES

Suitable for vegetarians YES

Tesco was the best-performing of the big-name supermarkets in our test. Its mince pie got a good score for taste in particular.

Tasters commented on its 'lovely texture' and 'tasty filling'. Like all Best Buys, it's suitable for vegetarians.

## The leftovers

Some big names missed out on being Best Buys. Asda Extra Special Rich Fruit Brandy Mince Pies, (£1.68) came just under the mark at 67%.

Others that failed to meet our standard were Waitrose All

### Some big names that failed to make the grade

Butter Mince Pies (£2.19, 66%), Harrods Luxury Mince Pies (£5.95, 66%), and Sainsbury's Taste the Difference Brandy Rich Mince Pies, (£1.89, 63%). All received fairly ordinary three-stars for taste. Asda did

better on appearance (five stars) than Waitrose, Harrods and Sainsbury's) which got just two. Three stars was par for the course for aroma for all but Sainsbury's, which scored just two.

