



# Ice-cream makers

## NEED TO KNOW

Using an ice-cream machine is surprisingly straightforward.

Basic ice cream starts with a chilled custard base: a mixture of egg yolk, milk/cream and sugar, plus flavourings. You pour this into your machine, which simultaneously churns and freezes it. Churning mixes in air and stops ice crystals from forming and, after about 30 minutes, you can tuck into creamy, soft ice cream.

For the quickest results, choose a machine with a built-in freezer. These cost upwards of £200 but are ready to use within a few minutes.

Other machines are heaps cheaper (costing from £20 to £35) but you have to plan ahead. They have removable mixing bowls which you have to pre-freeze for up to 24 hours before adding your ice-cream mixture.

### PREPARATION TIME

Making the basic ice-cream mixture can take time, too. Most recipes involve heating and cooling liquid, which can take about an hour, and the fruit-based ice cream recipes involve peeling, chopping and grating. However, none of this is hard work – it just takes a little organisation. And it's all worth the effort as you end up with a delicious product that's fresh, natural and free from nasty preservatives, stabilisers and artificial flavours.

BEST ON TEST

### 1 Magimix

### BEST BUYS

The extra waistline inches our testers added by eating gallons of machine-made vanilla, strawberry and chocolate ices and fruit sorbets are testament to one key fact: all the machines tested make good ice cream. Our three Best Buys are the quickest, easiest and most enjoyable to use. But there are four great-value options also worth considering.

The **Magimix (1)**, with its waistband-stretching 1.5-litre capacity, is the Best on Test. You don't need a freezer to use this machine as it has one built in. It's ready to freeze just five minutes after being plugged in, and most recipes we tried were ready in well under 25 minutes – great if you're prone to sudden cravings. Plus, there's a handy second bowl if you want to make an extra batch. It's one of the easiest machines to clean and comes with some interesting recipes, such as tomato sorbet, or oat, apple and fromage frais ice cream. It needs lots of worktop and storage space (its footprint is 35cmx30cm). At over 12kg, it's twice the weight of most machines so not ideal for lifting in and out of cupboards. It's also one for the bigger wallet – the white version (shown) is £225 and the stainless steel version is £285, both from John Lewis.

In contrast, the **Panasonic (2)** is appealingly modest in both price and size. At just £35 from Lakeland Limited, it's easily the smallest and neatest model on test. Unusually, this machine is battery powered. No pre-freezing is needed: just place your mixture in the bowl, attach the mixing blade and lid, switch it on, then place the unit in your freezer. The blade churns intermittently while the freezer cools and hardens the mixture. This process takes between one and three hours – depending on quantity – and flashing lights indicate what stage has been reached. The two

### USING

Most ice-cream machines are a breeze to use. You switch on, to set the paddle going (as shown right), then pour the mixture in. Virtually all models, including this Magimix, have a viewing window so you can watch the transformation occurring. This should take around 30 minutes. It's easy to tell when the ice cream is ready. The paddle will stop, or struggle to turn, as the ice cream thickens; you can then just switch off the machine and serve. The Gaggia (3) has a timer that you can program to stop the machine.

lithium batteries it needs aren't cheap – about £7 each in shops and £2 each online – but they should last for about 25 cycles. You can buy rechargeable versions, too. The machine is discreet – no noisy whirring to bother you – fits easily into the freezer and is a cinch to clean, as all parts (except the motor housing) are dishwasher-safe. The recipe book is nicely designed, with attractive photos. We love the

**BEST BUY**

**3 Gaggia**

**CLEANING**  
It's important to clean your machine thoroughly. Most models, like this Gaggia, have removable parts you can place in the dishwasher. Some, like the Rival (10), have lots of nooks and crannies where bacteria could lurk.



**SIZE**  
If you already have a platoon of appliances jostling for cupboard or worktop space, it's worth noting the difference in size between models. This Panasonic (below right) is small: its footprint is similar to a jug kettle's. At the other extreme, the built-in freezers on the Magimix (1) and Gaggia (3, below left) mean they're boxy, heavy and awkward to move. Most machines,



**BEST BUY**

**2 Panasonic**



like the Philips (4, above centre), have a diameter about the same size as a dinner plate. Check that these machines' bowls (see table for dimensions) will fit in your freezer.

PHOTOGRAPHY NICK WRIGHT

simplicity of this machine and think it's perfect for smaller quantities.

Our third recommendation, the **Gaggia (3)**, is the priciest machine on test. Made in Italy, it's a sturdy, traditional design that looks and feels like a quality product. At £296 from Lakeland Limited, the Gaggia isn't cheap, but it has several advantages. Like the top-scoring Magimix, its built-in freezer means it's almost instantly ready to use. The machine will stop when the ice cream is too thick for the paddle to turn. It also has a timer switch. There are two bowls, one fixed, one removable, so you can make a second batch straight away. The recipe book lacks photos but has a good range of suggestions.

This machine is for you if you have plenty of cupboard or worktop space, plan to make lots of ice cream and are happy to spend nearly £300.

Following swiftly behind are the models from Philips (4), Kenwood (5), Rosemary Conley (6) and Magimix (7). At around £20 to £40, these are all good value and easy to use. They have no major drawbacks but they're less handy because you have to pre-freeze the mixing bowls.

Neither of the Rival machines impressed us. The pricier Rival (10) has around 24 parts – including its ice-cream-van-style dispenser – and is a nightmare to assemble and clean.

## Nice and icy

One huge advantage of having an ice-cream machine is that you can make an infinite range of recipes.

Each machine comes with suggestions but there are several books and websites – simply put 'ice-cream recipes' into an internet search engine – offering further enticing ideas.

As well as traditional ices, you can make sorbet and granita (a slushy dessert) or try using tofu, fromage frais or yogurt.

### TOP TIPS

- Always store ice cream in the centre of the freezer where the temperature is most constant.
- Its fresh ingredients and lack of preservatives

mean that homemade ice cream should be eaten within a week.

- Before serving, leave at room temperature for 15 minutes or for 30 minutes in the fridge to let flavours develop.
- Alcohol doesn't freeze well at normal freezer temperatures so don't be tempted to use too much.
- Never refreeze ice cream: you run the risk of food poisoning, and the texture will deteriorate.
- Restaurateur Heston Blumenthal's bacon and egg recipe might not be to your taste but options are limitless if you're bored with plain old vanilla. Why not experiment with avocado, green tea, or lavender and honey?



### TABLE NOTES

We tested a selection of models that are easily available from the high street or online.

### Specification

**Size** S – small, M – medium, L – large. **Capacity** The maximum quantity of ice cream, which is greater than its ingredients due to added air and thickening during the process. **Freezer space** The

height and width of bowls to be pre-frozen. Check these can fit in your freezer area. **Total features** A guide to the number of desirable features such as viewing window, non-slip feet, dishwasher-proof parts and so on.

### Convenience

**Using** Ease of basic operation, such as assembly, controls and adding ingredients. **Recipes** How

extensive and inspiring each recipe book is.

### Performance

**Time** How long it takes to prepare the machine for use and to convert mixture to ice cream. **Quality** Our testers' and an expert's verdict on taste, appearance, smell and texture of vanilla ice cream made according to the machine's recipe and our own.

### KEY



### SCORE

This ignores price and is based on:

Quality of ice cream	50%
Convenience	30%
Preparation	10%
Features	10%

Ice-cream makers	Specification					Convenience				Performance		Score (%)
	Price (£)	Size	Capacity (litres)	Freezer space (cm)	Total features	Using	Recipes	Noise	Cleaning	Time	Quality	
<b>1</b> Magimix Gelato Chef 2200 <sup>a</sup>	225	L	1.5	n/a	☆	☆	☆	●	★	★	★	81
<b>2</b> Panasonic BH-941P	35	S	0.75	14x17	●	★	●	★	☆	☆	★	78
<b>3</b> Gaggia Gelateria	296	L	1	n/a	★	★	☆	○	★	★	☆	77
<b>4</b> Philips HR2303/L	35	M	0.8	10x20	○	☆	●	☆	☆	○	★	75
<b>5</b> Kenwood IM250	30	M	1	15x21	☆	☆	★	●	○	○	★	74
<b>6</b> Rosemary Conley CT-DM1	20	M	1	14x17	☆	☆	★	○	☆	○	★	74
<b>7</b> Magimix Le Glacier 1.1 <sup>b</sup>	30	S	1.1	14x19	●	☆	☆	☆	☆	○	★	73
<b>8</b> Hinari Lifestyle ICM350	26	M	1.3	14x19	☆	☆	●	○	☆	●	☆	63
<b>9</b> Rival Gel Disc GC9101-IUK	30	M	1.2	7x18	○	○	●	●	○	○	☆	59
<b>10</b> Rival Soft Serve GC8250	35	M	1.5	17x21	○	●	●	○	●	●	☆	52

<sup>a</sup> Also available in stainless steel finish for £285 <sup>b</sup> Also available in chrome finish for £50. Similar version with 1.5-litre capacity