

American-style fridge

NEED TO KNOW

American-style fridge-freezers have the fridge and freezer next to each other rather than one on top of the other as in conventional models. As well as doubling storage space, the higher shelves and extra door racks in the freezer mean you don't have to bend down as often to dig out food from the lowest compartments.

COLOURS

You can buy most models in white and stainless steel. The Whirlpool and GE also come in black, and the Samsung is available in a matt silver finish.

COST

American-style fridge-freezers can be pricey. We've looked at models that cost between £600 and £1,500. A top-of-the-range model featuring an LCD TV, MP3 player, email and internet access and titanium finish would set you back over £6,000.

Although they cost on average twice as much to run as conventional models, their larger storage means the cost per litre is very similar.

TEMPERATURE

The temperature throughout the whole fridge is more uniform in side-by-side models than in conventional fridge-freezers – all the models we tested scored ★. This gives you more flexibility – you don't have to worry about keeping meat and fish on lower shelves to ensure they stay cool.



ICE MAKER

Many models have external ice makers that dispense cubes or crushed ice as well as chilled water. To ensure a continuous supply you'll have to connect these models to the mains water supply, which isn't always easy. The ice maker on this Whirlpool is set within the door, which leaves more space to freeze food in the main compartment. In the poorly designed Bosch, however, even if you take out the ice maker you can't use most of the space left behind.

1 Whirlpool

BEST BUYS

All the models we looked at achieved consistently cool temperatures to keep ice cream and frozen veggies in tip-top condition. They're also all frost-free, so you won't have to go through the chore of defrosting. So for our Best Buys we focused on how easy they are to use (no tricky thermostats) and how quickly they cool food down.

Top of the pile is the **Whirlpool (1)**, £999 from Miller Brothers. We like its electronic control panel, which is easy to understand and gives you complete control over the fridge, freezer and the ice maker. Its fast rate of freezing helps preserve the quality of food better than many other models. However, it's not so handy for a very big family because the total usable space is small compared with other models.

In second place is the **GE (2)**, £1,450 from www.365electrical.com. It's the quickest at cooling fresh food in the fridge. It's also quieter and larger inside than the Whirlpool. It has loads of two-star-rated freezer racks in the door for storing pre-frozen groceries, such as ice cream, for up to a month – so many that we think you'll probably never use them all.

The **Samsung (3)**, £849 from Currys, gives you lots of storage at a good price. It has the best insulation, which helps to keep temperatures consistent, and it's very quiet. Setting up the fridge, freezer and ice maker on the external electronic panel is simple. But, at the manufacturer's recommended temperature setting, the fridge will not preserve delicate items such as loose-leaf salad very well.



2 GE

American-style fridge-freezers

MODEL

- 1 Whirlpool S20D RBB 32 - A/G
- 2 GE PCG 21 MMFFWW
- 3 Samsung RS21 FCNS
- 4 LG GRL 207 DVZA
- 5 Frigidaire GLSZ 28 V8 CFO
- 6 Bosch KGU 66920/ 14
- 7 Daewoo FRS 2021 IAL
- 8 AEG S7388 KGD

-freezers

BEST BUY

3 Samsung

EXTRAS

Features that you won't normally find on a conventional fridge-freezer include the handy mini-bar, as in this Samsung. This allows you to cool bottles without opening the fridge. All you have to do is pull down the tray and pour your drink, reach over to the ice maker and then pop the bottle back into the cooler. What's really clever is that it doesn't take up lots of space inside the fridge, so you have more room for storing other groceries.



Storage

Although they provide the storage space of two normal fridge-freezers, side-by-side models are on average nearly three times wider but only a third deeper than conventional models.

Unfortunately, the space you can actually use is typically about 20 per cent lower than that claimed by manufacturers. (Our figures for capacity in the table take account of shelves, drawers, thermostats and so on when determining how much space is realistically usable for storing groceries.) The worst offender is the Bosch, where the space you can actually use is 189 litres, or 333 pints of milk, lower than claimed.



TABLE NOTES

We tested best-selling models from leading brands. Admiral, Amana and Maytag are missing as they had just changed their ranges.

KEY



Specification

Price Lowest widely available. Online prices are in *italics*.

Room temp Range of temperatures at which it works.

Performance

Temp stability (fridge/freezer)

Stability of internal temperature of fridge/freezer in hot or cold room. **Cooling (fridge/freezer)** How quickly fridge cools food from room temperature and freezer freezes fresh food.

Models rated ☆ are more likely to preserve texture and quality.

Convenience

Ease of use How easy it is to control temperatures, use features and manage space.

SCORE

This ignores price and is based on:

Temperature stability	20%
Cooling rate	20%
Noise and vibration	15%
Ease of use	15%
Performance on recommended setting	10%
Insulation	10%
Uniform fridge temp	10%

WHICH? EXTRA

For details of the conventional fridge-freezers we've tested, including two new Best Buys and 18 other models still available from previous tests, go to www.which.co.uk/fridgefreezers

Specification								Performance				Convenience		Score
Price (£)	hwxwd (cm)	Fridge (litres)	Freezer (litres)	Energy label	Running cost (£/yr)	Room temp (°C)	Ice maker	Fridge temp stability	Freezer temp stability	Fridge cooling	Freezer cooling	Noise	Ease of use	(%)
999	179x152x79	240	134	A	44	16 to 38	✓	★	★	○	☆	☆	★	82
1,450	178x159x76	261	138	B	42	16 to 43	✓	★	★	☆	●	★	☆	80
849	175x151x72	288	139	A	41	10 to 43	✓	★	★	○	●	★	☆	79
1,050	176x153x78	265	141	A	43	16 to 32	✓	★	○	○	☆	★	☆	76
999	177x155x90	351	177	B	53	18 to 43	✓	★	☆	○	●	★	☆	73
1,223	180x150x87	358	184	A	49	16 to 38	✓	☆	☆	●	☆	☆	☆	72
600	182x159x82	288	167	A	36	16 to 32	✓	★	○	☆	●	☆	☆	68
1,231	177x155x90	351	177	B	58	18 to 38	✓	★	☆	○	●	☆	☆	67