

Cookers for all tastes

Whether it's a gas or electric cooker you're looking for, we've got Best Buys to suit everyone

From bargain buys to budget busters, there's huge variety between the 24 freestanding cookers on test. For only £238, you can bag a Best Buy gas cooker from Tricity Bendix (15) while the stylish Smeg (1) will cost you £1,000. Its top Best Buy status proves that style can have substance – but at a hefty price compared with other cookers.

We looked at all types of gas and electric freestanding cookers, including models with single and double ovens and electric models that offer multi-function cooking. This allows you to cook with a combination of heat from the top and the bottom of the oven, the fan and grill. We

found that cookers with multi-function ovens and electric ovens with fans distribute heat more evenly and maintain temperature more accurately than conventional ovens.

Style-wise, some of the cookers are a real throwback to the 1950s. The Tricity Bendix (15) and the New World (23) both come with eye-level grills above the hob, useful for keeping an eye on your bacon as it sizzles.

On the other hand, the Smeg (1) is packed with state-of-the-art features.

So, whether you want something retro or modern, standard or feature-packed, there is a Best Buy out there for you.



CLEAN AS A WHISTLE

Harold Thompson 66,

retired company secretary

Which? member Harold Thompson from St Neots, Cambridgeshire, believes that consumers should look for cookers with self-cleaning catalytic liners. His new cooker has a double oven and he is very pleased with the stay-clean coating in the main oven cavity – only the bottom of the main oven needs manual cleaning. 'There's a catalytic coating on all of the other surfaces,' Harold says. 'It's just a pity that the top oven doesn't have the same thing.'

What you should look for

FLEXIBLE COOKING ZONES

The electric hob ring can be expanded or reduced to provide just the right amount of heat for pans of all sizes



FAN AND DOUBLE OVENS

Most electric ovens have a fan, which distributes heat more evenly. A double oven gives you the flexibility to cook at different temperatures at the same time



GRILL

Whether eye-level or part of the oven itself, good grills heat evenly across the width of the grill pan

HOB

Electric hobs can be easy-to-clean ceramic or electric plates. Gas burners spread the heat evenly around the bottom of the pan

NON-TIP SHELVES

This means that the shelves in the oven or grill don't leave their runners and offer you some extra protection when dealing with hot and heavy dishes



CATALYTIC LINERS

Rough surfaces on the oven walls absorb and break down spills which are burned off during normal cooking, making the oven easier to clean



**1 ELECTRIC**

71% Smeg SUK62CMX5 £1,000

This slick Smeg is packed with features. There's a flexible cooking zone on the hob, which caters for large or small pots. And on the control panel there's a digital clock and timer.

Both ovens distribute heat evenly. The hob works well at high and low temperatures and the grill spreads heat evenly. Cheapest at Comet.

WORTH KNOWING The stainless steel finish is hard to keep clean.

Available Asda, Comet, Currys, John Lewis, online and independents **Width** 60cm **Number of ovens** Two **Oven volumes** 30 and 56 litres **Colour** Stainless steel only

WHICH?
BEST BUY

**2 ELECTRIC**

68% Indesit KD6C35W £350

This cooker comes with a double oven and an easy-to-clean ceramic hob. The grill spreads heat well, meaning that food browns evenly. We made great cakes in the main oven, where heat is distributed evenly. The hob works efficiently and there's plenty of room for pots and pans. Cheapest at Argos and Comet.

WE LIKE How accurately the controls regulate the temperature of the oven.

Available Argos, Asda, Comet, online and independents **Width** 60cm **Number of ovens** Two **Oven volumes** 37 and 67 litres **Colours** White and moonstone

WHICH?
BEST BUY

**3 ELECTRIC**

67% AEG-Electrolux D98000VFM £899

This cooker is part of the Competence range and has a variety of helpful features to match its excellent cooking performance. It has a double oven and ceramic hob with easy-to-use controls. The hob also has flexible rings with extra elements and there are grills in both ovens. The hob, grill and oven all boil, brown and bake effectively. Cheapest at John Lewis.

WE LIKE The number of cooking options available.

Available Asda, John Lewis, online and independents **Width** 60cm **Number of ovens** Two **Oven volumes** 36 and 56 litres **Colours** White and stainless steel

WHICH?
BEST BUY

**15 GAS**

65% Tricity Bendix L50M2WN £238

If you like grilling, this is a good choice. The handy eye-level grill, which has a non-tip shelf, browns more effectively than models three times its price. But with just one oven and grill, cooking options are limited. And at 50cm, the hob can get cramped. In spite of this, it works well. Cheapest at Asda.

WE LIKE The storage compartment under the oven.

Available Asda, B&Q, online and independents **Width** 50cm **Number of ovens** One **Oven volume** 63 litres **Colours** White and Green

WHICH?
BEST BUY

How we test

We use our loaf – make that 26 loaves and 576 fairy cakes – putting our cookers to the test

Cake baking

We bake two trays of fairy cakes in each of the cookers. In total, that's 576 cakes. The quality of the cakes shows us how evenly the heat is distributed around the oven.



Raising a toast

We toast white bread on the grill tray to see how evenly the heat spreads across the grill pan. This adds up to 520 slices or 26 loaves.

well the hobs heat at low temperatures without burning the food.

Heat probes

Temperature probes measure how well ovens maintain the right temperature. They also record any effect the hob has on the temperature of the top oven.

Simmer down

Rice pudding heated on maximum and then left to simmer shows us how



GREAT SAVINGS WITH HUGHES DIRECT

Exclusive member discounts

This May, Hughes Direct is offering exclusive discounts for Which? members on Best Buy electric cookers from this month's report. There are savings of up to 20 per cent on these models – all special-offer prices include delivery.

To find out more details about this cookers offer and other member-only discounts from Hughes Direct, log on to www.hughesdirect.co.uk/ which or call 01473 321883. Offer valid until 31 May 2008 and is subject to availability.

Each month thousands of Which? members take advantage of the great deals

offered by Hughes Direct. All goods are guaranteed to be a minimum of 10 per cent below high-street prices published in Which? product reports (even when delivery charges are taken into account).

In the unlikely event that you find the same product cheaper elsewhere (including delivery) within seven days of purchase, Hughes Direct promises to refund 110 per cent of the difference. Call now or go online to see how much you can save.



How to buy What you need to think about before your big buy

■ MEASURE CAREFULLY

Unless you're planning to buy a new kitchen, your cooker will need to fit into your existing gap. The most popular models are 50cm and 60cm wide.

■ **GAS OR ELECTRIC** Gas hobs are easier to control and spread the heat right around the base of your pots. Electric ovens offer you more cooking options and most have fans to spread the heat evenly around the cavity.

■ BUYING AND INSTALLING

While some large retailers will deliver for free, the full package of delivery, installation and removal can cost as much as £99. Independents are a good option for quick delivery and cheap installation, but ranges can be limited.

Whether it's gas or electric, you'll need to get your cooker professionally installed. For gas cookers, you'll need to have it installed by a Corgi-registered engineer (see 'Contacts', below).

■ CONNECTING ELECTRICS

For electric cookers, in England and Wales, as long as you're connecting to an existing cooker socket, you won't have to let your local authority know.

If you're installing a new circuit for the cooker, then Part P of the building regulations applies. You will have to notify your local authority unless the work is carried out by a qualified electrician with certification that exempts them from notification. In Scotland, use a certified electrician if the job is

covered by a building warrant. Similar rules don't apply in Northern Ireland.

■ GAS COOKERS IN FLATS

The standards regarding the installation of gas cookers in flats

have changed. If you're buying a new gas cooker for a flat or other multi-use dwelling, make sure it has flame supervision devices (FSDs) on each burner. An FSD will shut off the supply of gas should the burner fail to ignite or get blown out. If you buy a new gas cooker for a flat and it doesn't have FSDs, from 1 June 2008 Corgi-registered engineers won't be allowed to fit it.

■ **REMOVAL** Retailers will take away your old cooker when you buy a new one from them as long as it's disconnected first – if you pay for installation of a new machine, they'll also be able to carry out the disconnection work. If you'd prefer, you can use www.recyclenow.com to find a recycling centre near you.



Which should you choose?



Best for reduced hand strength

BELLING E668 £615 Not quite a Best Buy but this electric Belling (4) has large control knobs and prominent door handles, making the doors easy to open. It also comes with non-tip shelves and a push-button timer.

Best for visual impairment

INDESIT KD6C35W £350 Go for a cooker with controls that contrast well against the cooker itself, like this Indesit (2). As well as the controls being clearly marked, you can feel them clicking through each setting.

Best for cleaning

HOTPOINT EW74G £361 Stay-clean catalytic liners and a ceramic hob make this Hotpoint (5) easy to keep clean.

Best on a budget

TRICITY BENDIX L50M2WN £238 This Best Buy cooker (15) with eye-level grill is cheaper than most but a great option if you're looking for an inexpensive gas cooker that doesn't compromise on cooking ability.

OUR RESEARCH

When selecting cookers to test, we consult market intelligence reports, industry experts and manufacturers, then check online and high-street

availability. Test models include top sellers from popular brands, products with innovative features and models from lesser-known brands.

Contacts

AEG-Electrolux 0870 535 0350
www.aeg-electrolux.co.uk

Beko 0845 600 4911
www.beko.co.uk

Belling 0871 222 2503
www.belling.co.uk

Cannon 0870 150 6070
www.cannoncooking.co.uk

Electrolux 0870 595 0950
www.electrolux.co.uk

Hotpoint 0870 150 6070
www.hotpoint.co.uk

Indesit 0870 150 6070
www.indesit.co.uk

Leisure 0845 600 4916
www.leisurecp.co.uk

New World 0871 222 2504
www.newworldappliances.co.uk

Smeg 0870 990 9907
www.smeguk.com

Stoves 0871 222 2502
www.stoves.co.uk

Tricity Bendix 0870 595 0950
www.tricity-bendix.co.uk

Zanussi-Electrolux

0870 572 7727
www.zanussi-electrolux.co.uk

Finding a qualified installer

BRE Certification Ltd
01923 664100
www.bre.co.uk

British Standards Institution
0845 076 5600
www.bsi-global.com/kitemark

Corgi 0800 915 0485
www.trustcorgi.com

ELECSA Limited
0845 634 9043
www.elecsa.org.uk

NAPIT Certification Ltd
0870 444 1392
www.napit.org.uk

NICEIC Certification Ltd
0870 013 0382
www.niceic.org.uk

Select (Scotland's electrical trade association)
0131 445 5577
www.select.org.uk

USING THE TABLE

The more stars the better.

Specification

Price For Best Buys, we give the cheapest widely available high-street price as we went to press. If we couldn't find the cookers at major high-street retailers, we give the most

common online price. Prices for other models are a guide to what you should expect to pay. Go to www.which.co.uk/shopping for the latest prices. **Oven type** Cookers either have one oven compartment (single) or two (double). **Grill type** Position of the grill:

Top = In top oven. Both = A grill in both ovens. Eye = Eye-level grill. Separate= Stands alone in its own compartment. **Catalytic liners** Self-cleaning liners keep the inside of the oven clean while you cook.

Test performance

Hob ★★★★★ means the hob can heat

quickly and efficiently and simmer very well without burning. **Grill** ★★★★★ means an excellent spread of heat across the grill pan leaving food properly browned all over without burning. ★ means a very small or uneven spread of heat across the grill pan. **Oven** ★★★★★ means the oven

reaches the correct temperature quickly and maintains this well. ★★ means the oven takes a long time to heat up and deviates from the set temperature. **Ease of use** ★★★★★ means a cooker with easy-to-use controls and a grill and oven that are easy to set.

Ease of cleaning ★★★★★ means the cooker is easy to clean with only a sponge and soapy water.

Score

Ignores price and is based on:
Hob **30%**
Oven **30%**
Ease of use and cleaning **30%**
Grill **10%**

MODEL	PRICE (£)	SIZE (cm) (hwxwd)	OVEN TYPE	GRILL TYPE	CATALYTIC LINERS	HOB	GRILL	OVEN	EASE OF USE	EASE OF CLEANING	SCORE %
ELECTRIC											
1 SMEG SUK62CMX5	1,000	98X60X60	Double	Top		★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★	71
2 INDESIT KD6C35W	350	90X60X61	Double	Top		★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	68
3 AEG-ELECTROLUX D98000VFM ^a	899	91X60X64	Double	Both	✓	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	67
4 BELLING E668	615	89x60x62	Double	Both		★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	64
5 HOTPOINT EW74G	361	91x60x61	Double	Top	✓	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	63
6 BEKO DC5422X	280	91x50x63	Single	Separate		★★★★★	★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	62
7 HOTPOINT C367EXH	420	91x60x62	Double	Top	✓	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	61
8 CANNON C60EKW	523	91x60x61	Double	Top	✓	★★★★★	★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	60
9 INDESIT KD3E1	230	90x50x64	Single	Separate		★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	58
10 LEISURE AL6CDW	300	91x60x63	Single	Separate		★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	58
11 NEW WORLD E60D	400	91x60x61	Double	Top		★★★★★	★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	58
12 ZANUSSI-ELECTROLUX ZKC6020W	360	92x60x64	Double	Top		★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	58
13 HOTPOINT HW170EW	300	91x50x65	Single	Separate	✓ ^b	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	56
14 BELLING 335AN	240	91x50x63	Single	Separate		★★★★★	★	★★★★	★★★★	★★	54
GAS											
15 TRICITY BENDIX L50M2WN	238	146x50x60	Single	Eye		★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	65
16 ELECTROLUX EKG6046KN	435	92x60x64	Double	Top	✓	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	59
17 CANNON C60GCW	409	91x60x62	Double	Top	✓	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★	★★★★	★★★★★	57
18 BELLING G755	259	91x50x62	Single	Separate		★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	56
19 BEKO DVG593S	260	91x50x64	Double	Top		★★★★★	★★★★★	★★	★★★★	★★★★★	55
20 CANNON C60GPX	690	92x60x63	Double	Top	✓	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★	★★★★	★★	55
21 HOTPOINT GW38G	301	92x50x65	Single	Separate	✓ ^b	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★	★★★★	★★★★	55
22 BEKO DG582S	210	91x50x64	Single	Separate		★★★★★	★★★★	★★	★★★★	★★★★★	53
23 NEW WORLD 50HLG	298	142x50x62	Single	Eye		★★★★★	★★★★★	★★	★★★★	★★★★★	53
24 STOVES 600SIDLM	312	91x60x61	Single	Separate		★★★★★	★★★★	★★	★★★★	★★★★★	50

^a This is from the Competence range ^b Catalytic liners in main oven only