

More toaster for less bread

We found you can buy a decent model from just £5 and that paying more doesn't guarantee you'll get better toast



You can buy a toaster for anything from £3 to £150, and our tests show there are good choices throughout that price range. How much you pay will depend on whether you want to have features such as digital controls or an automatic bread carriage that rises and falls at the touch of an electronic button.

When supermarkets began to sell cheap own-brand toasters, it forced down the price of entry-

level models. Traditional manufacturers can't compete effectively at this level and have concentrated on persuading us to trade up to models that offer more than the supermarket fare.

This has meant a wider choice than before. However, there's little relationship between price and the quality of the toast you can expect. Our lab tests revealed you can get good and poor toasters no matter how much you pay. We've shown some of the best here.



Which? online Toasters

To read full test results for the supermarket toasters, to avoid buying a toaster that 'lacks the power to toast frozen bread

fully' and to see how we test, see www.which.co.uk/toasters. You'll find details of all the 74 models we've tested.

Budget toasters (£5-£15)

These are packed high and sold cheap at supermarkets, with some in electrical stores. All four top-selling two-slice toasters cost less than £15.

We tested models costing up to £10 from Argos, Asda, John Lewis and Sainsbury's. They tend to be quicker than more expensive models which can be a disadvantage, as quicker models sometimes toast less evenly. However, we didn't find these were particularly poor at browning. A toaster with a shallow slot or small toasting area leaves some bits pale. Look out for this when comparing value toasters. The two below are good, though not quite Best Buys.

Worth considering

John Lewis VE35 68% £10

This well-built, easy-to-clean model makes fairly even toast. It has

simple controls: defrost, reheat and cancel buttons, and a browning knob. But it takes almost three minutes to toast fresh bread and another 30 seconds for frozen. The narrow slots are fine for bagels but not crumpets or bloomer loaves. Those with big fingers or limited grip may struggle with the browning knob, as it doesn't stick out enough.

Sainsbury's Basics 595-125 65% £5

This is easy to use, pretty quick and toasts quite evenly (though you will get a pale strip at the bottom of a slice). We found it difficult to make toast from frozen bread as there's no defrost function and it's difficult to set the browning control for frozen bread. It's easy to insert slices, but longer breads such as pitta won't fit.



John Lewis VE35



Sainsbury's Basics 595-125

WHAT YOU GET FOR YOUR MONEY

Common features

- Plastic body
- Own-brand or no brand name
- Tend to be quicker than more expensive models

Basic functions

- Browning control
- Bread carriage lever
- Cancel button
- Removable crumb tray
- Fixed slot width

Standard toasters (£12-£30)



You can expect more features, a choice of colours and a more attractive model for this price. Most electrical shops have their own brand of toasters, and many fall into this price band. See Cookworks at Argos, Bellini at Currys and Proline at Comet.

Best Buys

Breville VTT006 80% £21

The Breville is excellent, cheap and well built. It browns fresh and frozen bread evenly. It's easy to load but the bread sits low, even before the lever is depressed. You need to use the high-lift facility to get crumpets and even bread out without burning fingers. Longer

slices such as pitta won't fit and a traditional loaf with a big crust may catch on the end of the slots. It's cheapest at John Lewis and is also available online.

Breville VTT001 73% £17

Toast that is evenly browned on both sides and simple controls help make this a Best Buy. It takes about two and a half minutes to toast fresh bread, and three for frozen. Most sizes of bread fit the slots, but longer or taller breads need to be cut in half. It can also toast bagels, crumpets and tea cakes. It's cheapest at Argos, where it's called the Breville stainless steel and black two-slice toaster.

WHAT YOU GET FOR YOUR MONEY

Common features

- Plastic and painted metal or polished steel casings
- Coordinating kettles are sometimes available

Basic functions plus

- Variable slot widths
- High-lift bread carriage lever
- Defrost/frozen bread button
- Reheat button
- Function indicator lights



Breville VTT006



Breville VTT001

Lifestyle toasters (£25-£100)

This type of toaster typically includes those with retro or modern styling that hints of Sunday mornings curled up with the papers, bagels and croissants.

You'll also find models sold on their speed or ease of use; those that come in fashionable colours or with bells and whistles to appeal to gadget fans.

Most toasters of this type are produced by established brands such as Breville, Kenwood, Morphy Richards, Russell Hobbs and Tefal.

Best Buy

Currys Bellini BET260 71% £35

This well-built all rounder is easy to use and browns toast evenly. Like many models that do this, it's slow, taking more than three minutes to toast fresh

bread, plus another half a minute for frozen. The slots aren't long or deep enough for big slices such as bloomer or pitta, or loaves with a thick upper crust. You will often get a strip of unbrowned toast at the top of a slice.

Toast pops up smoothly and stands well clear of the surface so you don't burn your fingers. It also has an effective high-lift, so retrieving small items such as crumpets is a cinch.

Brushed stainless steel normally fingerprints very easily and is difficult to clean, but this toaster has a lacquered finish, so it does not stain or show fingermarks. It's available exclusively at Currys and also comes in black, when it is called the Bellini BET250.

WHAT YOU GET FOR YOUR MONEY

Common features

- Brushed, polished or painted steel casings
- Traditional brand names
- Named ranges include matching toasters, kettles and other kitchen appliances

Standard functions plus selections of

- Illuminated controls
- Digital controls
- Countdown timers
- Bagel function
- Warming rack
- Automated bread carriage
- Pause function
- Slot covers
- Spring-loaded crumb tray
- End of programme buzzers



Currys Bellini BET260

Premium toasters (£60-£150)

Buying a premium toaster is as much about making a style statement as it is about making toast.

In this category, the model is likely to be understated in appearance and, often, in functions, too. The target market for this type of toaster is those people who want a sophisticated look to their kitchen.

If you want a Best Buy two-slice toaster to match a Best Buy kettle, see the Magimix on p59.



The latest Dualit Lite (pictured right in two- and four-slice models) costs from £55. Other toasters made by this brand tend to be much more expensive. The previous Dualit Lite was a Best Buy and we're testing this one (which has more features) soon. Both the old and new Lites have soft-touch plastic and an embossed panel which replaces the shiny chrome fins of more expensive Dualits.

WHAT YOU GET FOR YOUR MONEY

Common features

- A premium brand name – Dualit, Magimix, Cuisinart
- Hefty chrome, brushed steel or painted casing and large footprint
- Retro or industrial design
- Replaceable components



Dualit Lite

