



# Toasters

## NEED TO KNOW

Time was the humble toaster claimed to do little more than sit quietly in a corner of your kitchen and brown your bread.

### NEW FEATURES

But times have changed and the latest versions are brighter and brasher, with a host of features that can light up your kitchen like a fairground. Digital LCD displays, flashing countdown lights, buzzers, beeps and dials that light up are more common.

Many toasters promise to reheat your toast and defrost your bread, and you might even find special bagel and crumpet functions. Bun warmers are becoming more sophisticated, too, as manufacturers develop integrated pop-up versions to warm croissants and rolls as well as buns. Spring-loaded crumb trays continue the innovative theme.

### DISAPPOINTING JOB

Special features aren't always very effective, though, and paying a premium doesn't guarantee good results. We made more than 200 pieces of toast and were disappointed that few models do a really excellent job of toasting both fresh and frozen bread (and some are poor at both).

But we've also found some decent all-rounders that will evenly brown your bread, toast your teacakes to perfection and even warm your buns through.



### BEST BUYS

Our five Best Buys not only do a good job of making toast, but are effective on crumpets and teacakes too and are easy to use and keep clean.

Best on test is the **Swan (1)**. It browns fresh and frozen bread evenly and has the best extra-lift facility of the toasters we tested, raising the bread carriage high enough to avoid burnt fingers. The reheating function is effective, too, warming the toast through without burning it or letting it get browner than you'd like. It costs £25 from Littlewoods and comes in red or stainless steel (which is the more widely available finish).

The **Kenwood (2)**, £30 from Comet, is the only Best Buy toaster in our test that has a matching Best Buy kettle. It's not especially speedy, but the results are worth waiting for and it will even toast the hard-to-reach top of a traditional

loaf. It heats croissants all the way through when you use the clip-on bun warmer and its feature buttons light up, which might cheer you up on a dark morning. It just might not stay so shiny and spotless forever: crumbs tend to get stuck in a seam at the top between the two slots and it's prone to finger marks. But if you don't mind the odd bit of polishing, it's a top choice.

The **Wahl (3)** is excellent value for money, costing just £10 from independents. Its white and grey plastic finish shouldn't detract from the fact that it's an effective toaster – and it does mean that it's nice and easy to clean. As its appearance suggests, it's a basic model; no fancy functions here, just reheating and defrosting facilities (which work well, incidentally). However, its lack of extra lift means you might find it

trickier to retrieve your crumpets than with other models. The slots are a little narrow and it's not as solid as others, but it's compact and simple and does its job well.

Another good-value option is the **Cordon Bleu (4)**, £15 from Argos. Simple, unfussy and robust, this toaster does the basics well, browning bread, crumpets and teacakes evenly. Some of its additional features are disappointing, though. Its extra lift facility didn't do quite enough to raise a crumpet above the top of the toaster, so you'll need to watch your fingers, and its reheat function tends to be slightly over-zealous, adding extra browning. But it's a great choice if you aren't likely to use those features too often.

The distinctive **Morphy Richards (5)**, £40 from Comet and John Lewis, is one of the few toasters we tested that can

**CRUMB TRAY**

Crumb trays make it easier to clean your toaster and most simply slide out and slot back in again, as the one on this Swan (below). We weren't impressed with the Haden's (21) crumb tray, however. It's hinged and you have to go to the trouble of unscrewing it every time you want to empty it. Cuisinart (8) has been a bit creative with its tray, which is spring-loaded: you press it and it pops out like a CD drawer.

**BEST BUY****2 Kenwood****WIN**

We've got five Kenwood toaster and kettle sets to give away. See p19 for details.

claim to be both flashy and effective. It boasts a blue LED that shows the browning level, countdown lights and an effective bun warmer that doubles up as a toast rack. It does an excellent job on frozen bread, teacakes and crumpets, although its toasting of fresh bread can be more uneven. Its slots are deep enough for larger slices of bread and it's easy to clean, partly thanks to the fact that it sits neatly in its crumb tray and lifts out when you want to empty the tray.

**REHEAT**

Most of the toasters we tested have a reheat feature, which is handy if your toast pops up before your beans are ready. However, there's a fine line between reheated toast and burnt toast. The function on this Wahl is excellent, reheating without further toasting, but when we tried to reheat using the Dualit (19) and Russell Hobbs (15), the toast came out overdone.

**BEST BUY****3 Wahl**

BEST  
BUY

4 Cordon Bleu

BEST  
BUY

5 Morphy Richards

## Innovations

### Countdown

Countdown features to help you judge the amount of time left until your toast is ready are becoming increasingly common. Not to be outdone by its noisy matching kettle (see p54), the Morphy Richards (13) beeps repeatedly when your toast is done. The Prima (14) model counts down by the second, as does

the Bosch (22) shown right.

### Safety

The Best Buy Swan (1) has a built-in safety system which kicks in if your bread gets jammed. The Bosch (22) also has this feature (right). If your bread gets stuck in the toasting slot, the safety system automatically cuts the power off.



## Toasters

### MODEL

- 1 Swan ST1056
- 2 Kenwood TT300
- 3 Wahl ZX515
- 4 Cordon Bleu 422/4648
- 5 Morphy Richards Manhattan
- 6 De'Longhi Metropolis CTM2023
- 7 Prestige Deco
- 8 Cuisinart 2-slice Toast Maker CMT2004
- 9 Krups ToastControl
- 10 Russell Hobbs Montana
- 11 Breville PT34
- 12 Kenwood TT320
- 13 Morphy Richards Opera
- 14 Prima PTT133BS
- 15 Russell Hobbs Classic
- 16 Rowlett Esprit 2 slice
- 17 Tefal Delfini 5396
- 18 Kenwood TT290
- 19 Dualit Vario2SLGB
- 20 Morphy Richards Memphis
- 21 Haden 10094
- 22 Bosch Solitaire TAT8SL1GB

## Matching options

For optimum style, you might like your kitchen appliances to match. But if you're after a good kettle and toaster, your options are a little limited. The Kenwood TT300 toaster (2) and SK630 traditional kettle are an excellent choice as both are Best Buys. But it's the only perfect pair we found after testing nine matching sets. Unfortunately, others are only half up to the job. The Kenwood jug kettle is best on test, for example, but

its matching toaster (18) is disappointing. Similarly, the Morphy Richards Opera kettle is a success while the matching toaster (13) does

**Kenwood offers a Best Buy matching kettle and toaster**



only a mediocre job.

Another option is the Russell Hobbs Montana set. The toaster (10) didn't make the grade as a Best Buy because it's a bit slow and not very good at toasting teacakes; it's also really tricky to get at your crumpets and teacakes once they're toasted, thanks to the lack of extra lift. But if all you want to do is toast slices of bread, it does a decent job and its matching kettle is a Best Buy.

**BUN WARMER**

Your toaster might come with a bun warmer, either as a separate rack that clips on top or a pop-up version that rises out of the toaster with a flick of a lever. Integral versions aren't any more or less effective than those that clip on, but they're great if you're prone to losing things and mean you won't have to rummage through your cupboards to find them.

This Morphy Richards has a reasonably effective clip-on version, but the

effectiveness of bun warmers overall tends to be a bit hit and miss. The rather elegant, integral warmer on the Bosch (22), below, was a let-down as it didn't heat a croissant all the way through.

**USING THE TABLE**

We tested 22 of the latest toasters available from best-selling brands.

**Specification**

**Price** For Best Buys, we give the cheapest widely available price as we went to press. Prices for other models are a guide to what you should expect to pay.

**Defrost** Lets you toast frozen bread. **Extra lift** The bread carriage is raised so it's easier to remove small items.

**Performance**

**Fresh bread/Frozen bread/Teacake/Crumpet** How evenly three runs of each of these were toasted. **Bun warmer** How well the toaster warmed up a croissant on the rack supplied.

**Reheating** How well the toaster reheated toast. **Speed** How long the toaster took to toast a slice of fresh bread, which ranged from

at least two minutes for a toaster rated ☆ to more than three minutes for one rated ●.

**Convenience**

**Small items** The ease of removing small items such as crumpets from the bread carriage at its highest point.

**Cleaning** How easy it is to clean the toaster's surfaces and crumb tray. **Ease of use** How easy it is to use the toaster, according to the instructions.

**SCORE**

**Ignores price and is based on:**  
Performance 80%  
Convenience 20%

**KEY**

★ ☆ ○ ● ●  
Best —————> Worst  
■ Best Buy

Specification			Performance							Convenience			Score
Price (£)	Defrost	Extra lift	Fresh bread	Frozen bread	Teacake	Crumpet	Bun warmer	Reheating	Speed	Small items	Cleaning	Ease of use	(%)
25	✓	✓	★	★	☆	☆		☆	☆	★	☆	☆	84
30	✓	✓	★	☆	☆	★	☆	☆	●	☆	○	☆	76
10	✓		☆	☆	☆	★		★	☆	○	★	☆	76
15	✓	✓	☆	☆	☆	★		○	○	○	☆	☆	74
40	✓	✓	○	★	★	★	☆	★	●	○	☆	☆	74
40	✓	✓	☆	★	☆	○		☆	●	★	☆	☆	71
35	✓	✓	○	★	○	★		☆	●	★	☆	☆	70
129		✓	○	☆	○	★		☆	○	☆	☆	☆	65
40	✓	✓	○	☆	○	★		☆	●	★	☆	☆	64
15			☆	☆	●	○			○	●	★	☆	64
30	✓	✓	●	★	☆	☆	★	☆	●	○	☆	☆	63
15	✓	✓	○	★	○	☆	☆		●	●	☆	○	63
18	✓	✓	○	☆	☆	○	★	★	●	○	★	☆	63
20	✓	✓	○	☆	○	☆		★	☆	○	☆	☆	63
20	✓	✓	☆	★	○	●		●	○	●	○	☆	61
133			○	○	☆	☆			☆	☆	☆	●	59
17	✓		○	○	☆	○			☆	☆	★	○	55
15	✓	✓	●	○	☆	○	○	○	☆	★	★	☆	53
109			○	●	☆	○		●	☆	★	☆	☆	52
30	✓	✓	●	●	○	☆	●	★	○	○	☆	☆	52
13			○	●	☆	★		☆	○	★	●	○	50
90			●	●	●	☆	●		☆	★	☆	☆	47