

We've updated this year's testing programme to ensure that our readers' priorities for the perfect toaster lie at the heart of our tests.

Last best hope

We've given each toaster the best chance of impressing us by assessing the evenness of browning on the most perfect slice



of bread we could find. This supermarket thick white is highly standardised; it's a consistent shape, which fits the average toaster slot perfectly, and is thick enough to stand in the bread chamber without sagging. Freshness is also standardised, so the moistness of the bread won't affect our results.

Templates for success

People want toasters that can handle loaves, crumpets, bagels and teacakes with equal aplomb. So, this year we've created a set of cardboard templates of these and many other breads, to check that each toaster slot can accommodate thick and thin, large, small and oddly-shaped bread. We check that each template fits in the slot with the bread carriage up and down, and that it's possible to remove the slice easily without burning your fingers.



Toast of the town

From egg soldiers to hot buttered crumpets or teacakes – toast is practically a national dish and we've found toasters to suit every taste

Like many of us, *The Good Food Guide's* winning chef, Frances Atkins, loves toast. In fact, it's one of her favourite foods. Here's her secret to the perfect slice: 'After toasting, stand the bread and let the steam go out for a couple of seconds before buttering, to allow it to crisp up.'

Frances, from Restaurant of the Year the Yorke Arms, prefers a toaster to a grill because it's quicker, easier and doesn't dry the bread out. As for the ideal model, it should produce toast that is 'evenly browned on both sides and not blotchy'.

Easier said than done, when you consider that toasters are pretty simple

machines. Their basic design hasn't changed much since their invention. The heating elements are a grid of wires wrapped back and forth along a board. Where they are uneven or protrude, they brown the toast unevenly. However, some models still do a great job.

We found seven Best Buys – ranging from £17 for a two-slicer to £125 for a four-slicer with dual controls and a bagel setting (see Cuisinart CMT400U, p66). We reveal the speediest models, which features are worth having (and which aren't), the most versatile models and which are easiest to use and keep clean.

'You don't have to reduce the browning setting when you're only toasting one slice'

What you should look for

BAGEL SETTING

The most useful bagel settings toast the cut side only. Others simply add extra time to the browning cycle to allow for the thicker bread

SLOTS

With four-slice toasters, separate controls for the left and right side chambers will give you more control. Wide, deep slots offer versatility

CRUMB TRAY

A spring mechanism makes this easy to remove without any spillage. Some models have a two-pronged tray for each slot, which doesn't catch all of the crumbs

FINISH

Plastic or coated steel finishes (such as those found on coloured toasters) tend to be easier to keep clean



**1 TWO SLICE****82% Krups FEM 231 Toast Expert £40**

This sturdy model has chunky controls, including a large, solid lever that's easy to lower and lock into place, making it good for anyone with impaired grip or dexterity problems. It's speedy too, toasting fresh bread nearly a minute-and-a-half more quickly than the slowest model. It has bagel and defrost settings and a matching kettle, the FLF2 Expert AquaControl.

Three high-lift positions prevent burnt fingers when retrieving smaller slices or crumpets. It's cheapest at Debenhams, House of Fraser and John Lewis.

WE LIKE It showed almost no fingerprints and was easy to clean using just a dry cloth.

Available Debenhams, House of Fraser, John Lewis
Extra lift Yes Bun warmer Yes Reheat Yes Bagel setting Yes Defrost Yes

WHICH?
BEST BUY

**2 TWO SLICE****81% Magimix Le Toaster £125**

This stylish toaster is the latest addition to the Magimix range. Magimix claims its products are built to last, because they're based on models used by professional chefs. It's one of the most consistent at evenly browning fresh and frozen bread and is extremely solid and well-built. Unusually for a two-slice toaster, it has separate settings for one or two slices, so you don't have to reduce the browning setting when you're toasting just one slice. Only drawback? It's prone to fingerprints. It's cheapest at Debenhams and John Lewis.

WORTH KNOWING It's available in polished and brushed stainless steel, cream, red and black.

Available Debenhams, John Lewis Extra lift Yes Bun warmer Yes Reheat No Bagel setting Yes Defrost Yes

WHICH?
BEST BUY

'the Krups toasts fresh bread nearly a minute and a half more quickly than the slowest model'

**3 TWO SLICE****79% Russell Hobbs 10617 Glass £30**

This Russell Hobbs model features a contemporary design and is particularly versatile. Its one long toasting slot can accommodate bread of all shapes and sizes, from bagels to bloomers or pitta bread. The control markings can be difficult to see and the buttons are small, so it's not the best choice for those with poor sight or dexterity, but other features, such as the high lift, impress. It's also quite easy to use and clean, making it good value for money. You'll find it for the best price at Debenhams and Tesco.

WORTH KNOWING Avoid using abrasive cream cleaners on this toaster, as they can scratch the metal surface.

Available Debenhams, Tesco Extra lift Yes Bun warmer No Reheat No Bagel setting No Defrost Yes

WHICH?
BEST BUY

Which should you choose?

Best for those with impaired sight

KRUPS FEM 231 £40 This model's (1) clear markings contrast well against the background, and it has large, well-positioned controls if you have limited dexterity.

Best on a budget

BREVILLE TT48 CLASSIQUE £17 The Breville is our cheapest Best Buy (5). Alternatively, the four-slice Kenwood TTP103 (19) also makes great toast for £20, although it's too slow to be a Best Buy.

Best for families

BREVILLE TT33 CAFÉ SERIES £80 This easy-to-use four-slicer (17) has separate controls for the left- and right-hand chambers, wide slots for toasting thicker breads and a bagel setting. It also feels sturdy and well built.

**Contacts**

Bellini
01925 248999
www.mistraluk.co.uk

Breville
0161 621 6900
www.breville.co.uk

Circulon
0151 482 8282
www.meyergroup.co.uk

Cookworks
0870 600 8784
www.argos.co.uk

Cuisinart
0870 240 6902
www.cuisinart.co.uk

Dualit
01293 652500
www.dualit.com

John Lewis
0845 6049 049
www.johnlewis.com

Kenwood
0239 239 2333
www.kenwoodworld.com/uk

Krups
0845 602 1454
www.krups.co.uk

Magimix
01483 427411
www.magimix.com

Marks & Spencer
0845 302 1234
www.marksandspencer.com

Morphy Richards
0870 060 2614
www.morphyrichards.co.uk

Prestige
0151 482 8282
www.meyergroup.co.uk

Rowenta
0845 602 1454
www.rowenta.co.uk

Russell Hobbs
0845 658 9700
www.russellhobbs.co.uk



4 TWO SLICE

75% Dualit Lite £50

For those in a hurry in the mornings, the Dualit Lite is the speediest of our Best Buys, taking on average one minute and 40 seconds to toast fresh bread, and the results are fairly even. The controls are large and easy to grip, although the markings could be easier to read. The Dualit Lite's only other feature is a bagel setting, which toasts the cut side only. It's available in a range of colours, including blue, cream and black. There's no cancel button, so you have to push the bread carriage lever up if you want to stop toasting. It also lacks a frozen bread setting, but you can achieve similar results using a slightly higher setting than normal. It's cheapest at House of Fraser and John Lewis.

WE LIKE The controls are large and easy to grip.

Available House of Fraser, John Lewis **Extra lift** Yes **Bun warmer** No **Reheat** No **Bagel setting** Yes **Defrost** No

WHICH?
BEST
BUY



17 FOUR SLICE

77% Breville TT33 Café Series £80

The solid, industrial-looking TT33 is the slowest of our Best Buys, but the results are excellent and it has some handy extra features. It has separate browning controls for the left- and right-hand slots, so you can use just two slots at a time, choose different settings or toast different types of bread in either side. However, you can't adjust the browning when using the frozen setting, so you're stuck with quite dark toast, which is fine if you like it that way. It's cheapest at Comet and Currys.

WE LIKE Its spring-loaded crumb tray slides out from the front rather than the side.

Available Comet, Currys **Extra lift** Yes **Bun warmer** No **Reheat** No **Bagel setting** Yes (crumpet setting) **Defrost** Yes

WHICH?
BEST
BUY



5 TWO SLICE

72% Breville TT48 Classique Stainless Steel £17

The TT48 isn't as versatile as other models (our traditional/rustic loaf wouldn't fit into the slot and some taller items stick out of the top during toasting), but it's great at the basics and quickly produces evenly browned toast. Rather than turning a dial, you have to use + and – buttons to select the desired browning level. The crumb tray tends to catch as you pull it out, so expect a few spilled crumbs. It's cheapest at Comet.

WORTH KNOWING The bagel and defrost settings are combined and simply add extra time to the toasting cycle, rather than toasting only the cut side.

Available Comet **Extra lift** Yes **Bun warmer** No **Reheat** Yes **Bagel setting** Yes (see above) **Defrost** Yes

EXCEPTIONAL
VALUE

WHICH?
BEST
BUY



18 FOUR SLICE

72% Cuisinart CMT400U Toast Maker £125

The Cuisinart CMT400U has dual controls for the left and right half and twin pop-out crumb trays in front. We like the large browning controls, but the settings can be tricky to read, as they don't light up until toasting starts. The slots are wide enough for bagels and teacakes and the bagel setting simply toasts for longer. It's rather pricy, but claims to last for an 'exceptionally' long time and to have a 'commercial-grade cast-metal housing'. It's available online.

WORTH KNOWING It comes with a five-year guarantee – versus the typical one-year warranty.

Available Online **Extra lift** Yes **Bun warmer** No **Reheat** Yes **Bagel setting** Yes **Defrost** No

WHICH?
BEST
BUY

MODEL

TWO SLICE

- 1 KRUPS FEM 231 Toast Expert
- 2 MAGIMIX Le Toaster
- 3 RUSSELL HOBBS 10617 Glass
- 4 DUALIT Lite
- 5 BREVILLE TT48 Classique Stainless Steel
- 6 BREVILLE TT68 Blue Ice
- 7 PRESTIGE 50988 Urban
- 8 DUALIT 20245 Vario
- 9 CIRCULON 50549 2 Slice Stainless Steel
- 10 KENWOOD TTM312 Virtu
- 11 BELLINI BET240 2 Slice Stainless Steel
- 12 JOHN LEWIS CPT160U 2 Slice Brushed SS
- 13 MARKS & SPENCER T684053 SS
- 14 ROWENTA TT618015 Prelude
- 15 COOKWORKS Signature 2 Slice SS
- 16 MORPHY RICHARDS 44063 Accents

FOUR SLICE

- 17 BREVILLE TT33 Café Series
- 18 CUISINART CMT400U Toast Maker
- 19 KENWOOD TTP103 Glacier
- 20 JOHN LEWIS CPT180U 4 Slice Brushed SS
- 21 RUSSELL HOBBS 9209-50 Classic

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. Other prices are a guide. Prices for models only available online are in italics. **Matching range** Whether it is part of a matching range with a kettle. **Bagel** and **Defrost** Whether it has these settings.

Test performance

Speed How long the model took to toast fresh and frozen bread.

Browning How evenly the model browned three runs of fresh and frozen bread. **Features** Based on the usefulness of features such as

SPECIFICATION				WHICH? TEST PERFORMANCE							SCORE %
PRICE (£)	MATCHING RANGE	BAGEL	DEFROST	SPEED	BROWNING	FEATURES	EASE OF USE	VERSATILITY	CLEANING	BUILD QUALITY	
40	✓	✓	✓	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	82
125	✓	✓	✓	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★	★★★★★	81
30	✓		✓	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	79
50		✓		★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	75
17	✓	✓	✓	★★★★★	★★★★	★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★	★★★★	72
40	✓		✓	★★★	★★★★★	★★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★★	68
18	✓		✓	★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★	★★★★	66
120	✓			★★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★	★★★★★	65
28	✓	✓	✓	★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★★	64
40		✓		★★★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	64
30			✓	★★★	★★★	★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	63
30		✓	✓	★★★★★	★★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★★	63
20	✓	✓		★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★	63
50	✓		✓	★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★	★★★★	★★	★★★★	60
13			✓	★★★★	★★★★	★★	★★★	★★★★	★	★★★	59
20	✓		✓	★	★★★★★	★★	★★★	★★★★	★★	★★★★	59
80	✓	✓	✓	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★	★★★★★	77
125		✓		★★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★★	72
20	✓		✓	★	★★★★	★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	66
40		✓	✓	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★★	63
50			✓	★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★	★★★★	★★	★★★	59

defrost and reheat settings. **Ease of use** How easy the toaster is to use. **Versatility** Based on the range of different-sized breads the toaster can accommodate – such as bagels, pitta breads, crumpets and teacakes (see How we test p64). **Cleaning** How prone the toaster is to fingerprints and how easy the surface is to clean. **Build quality** How sturdy the toaster is, including the controls, crumb tray, lever and slot mechanism.

Score

Ignores price and is based on:

Performance	50%
Convenience	30%
Build quality	10%
Versatility	10%

Facts & Scores

Tea cakes, toasties, long-lifers and matching sets...

Dynamic duo

Feeling flush? Consider splashing out on matching Best Buys Magimix Le Toaster (2) and 11565 kettle (see Kettles report on p68).

Keep on toasting

The Cuisinart CMT400U Toast Maker (18) is the only one on test to come with a five-year guarantee. So you get some peace of mind for forking out £125.

Narrowed options

The Russell Hobbs 9209-50 (21) was the only model with slots too narrow for toasting teacakes and doorsteps of home-made bread.

Peek as you go

The Kenwood TTM312 (10) allows you to lift up your bread to check on progress without stopping toasting. It also has a sandwich cage and adjustable slots.

OUR RESEARCH

When choosing toasters to test, we consult manufacturers, market intelligence reports and industry experts, then check availability on the high street and online. We include top-sellers from the most popular brands, those with innovative features, lesser-known brands and widely available Best Buys previously tested.

WHICH? ONLINE

Go online at www.which.co.uk/toasters for 46 models previously tested. This information is regularly updated with new models, availability and prices. See www.which.co.uk/loginhelp if you would like help logging in.