

Frying high

We put a range of best-selling frying pans through their paces to find which ones you should be using in your kitchen

Whether you want to feast on a fry-up, knock together an omelette or stir-fry vegetables, the humble frying pan will do the job. Frying is one of the quickest ways to cook, and it can be healthy. With modern non-stick pans you don't have to pour in a gallon of oil to stop your food sticking – you can get away with just lightly greasing the surface.

Our Best Buys are terrific. They cook well and score highly for convenience, too. We also tested different-sized pans in the same ranges and found that these performed about as well as the original-sized versions. So whatever size you choose, you'll get a great Best Buy pan.

Some pans claim to be dishwasher safe. We looked at how accurate these claims are and found that, after several washes, a few of them had suffered a small amount of external cosmetic damage – for example, slight discolouring of the outside coating. But most dishwasher-safe pans remained completely intact after ten washes.

The pans that didn't claim to be dishwasher safe didn't do as well – there tended to be more damage to the outside of the pan after a stint in the dishwasher. Reassuringly, however, none of the cooking surfaces of any of the pans tested was damaged.

Frying is one of the quickest ways to cook, and it can be healthy



76% Jamie Oliver (Tefal) Professional £42

This pan is a great all-rounder. It cooks food quickly and evenly and has a big cooking area. It's quite deep, making it practical for many recipes. It's a bit heavy but feels stable on the hob. You can put it in the oven up to 260°C. It's available from the House of Fraser.

WE LIKE A piece of soft rubber inserted into the handle makes gripping more comfortable.

Cheapest store House of Fraser **Weight** 1.3kg
Dishwasher safe Yes **Oven safe** Up to 260°C **Hob types** Gas, solid and radiant ring electric, ceramic, halogen



USING THE TABLE

We tested the most popular sizes of the biggest-selling pans from the main manufacturers. The more stars, the better.

Specification

Price For Best Buys, we give the widely available high-street price as we went to press. Prices for others are a guide to what you should expect to pay. Online prices are in *italics*.

Features

Dishwasher safe

According to the manufacturers' instructions. **Oven safe** According to the manufacturers, these pans can go into the oven up to the stated temperature in °C.

Test performance

Cooking speed and evenness (gas and electric)

How quickly the pan heated and how quickly and evenly food was cooked.

Non-stick coating

Whether food

residue was left after

cooking and how much oil prevented

sticking. **Handle**

comfort Ease of

grip and how hot

the handle got

during cooking.

Durability The effect

of 250 rubs with a

weighted abrasive

scourer and of being

cleaned ten times

in a dishwasher.

Score

This ignores price

and is based on:

Cooking **55%**

Features **20%**

Convenience **15%**

Durability **10%**



Facts & scores

Titbits of interesting information served up during our tests

Very heavy

The Le Creuset cast iron pan is a monster, weighing a mighty 2.6kg. This makes it quite difficult to lift with the handle but you can also hold a small lip on the opposite side.

Hard work

The White Heat Collection (MPW) Range 1001 copper pan looks great but, as the only pan on test without a non-stick coating, it took more effort than the rest to use and clean.

MODEL

- 1 **JAMIE OLIVER** (Tefal) Professional Series 26cm Hard Anodised Frypan
- 2 **JOHN LEWIS** The 25cm Frying Pan
- 3 **SKK** Titanium 24cm Frypan
- 4 **BERNDES** Bonanza Removable 24cm Frypan
- 5 **TEFAL** Practica 26cm Frypan
- 6 **JOHN LEWIS** Hard Anodised 24cm Frypan
- 7 **TEFAL** Privilege 26cm Frypan
- 8 **ANOLON** Professional Hard Anodised 24cm French Skillet
- 9 **JAMIE OLIVER** (Tefal) The Italian Series 26cm Frypan
- 10 **SELECT ADVANTAGE** 24cm French Skillet
- 11 **CIRCULON** Circulon 2 24cm Open French Skillet
- 12 **LE CREUSET** 26cm Cast Iron Non-stick Frypan
- 13 **PRESTIGE** Insignia Non-stick French Skillet, 24cm
- 14 **KENWOOD** Cookware 26cm Frypan
- 15 **SILVERSTONE** Inside/Outside Non-stick Open French Skillet, 24cm
- 16 **WHITE HEAT COLLECTION (MPW)** Range 1002 24cm Frypan, Hard Anodised
- 17 **WHITE HEAT COLLECTION (MPW)** Range 1001 24cm Frypan, Copper
- 18 **LE CREUSET** 3-ply Stainless Steel 24cm Frypan
- 19 **MARKS & SPENCER** 24cm Hard Anodised Frypan

a Not stated by the manufacturer b 1.2kg without lid, 1.9kg with lid c Manufacturer states 'not



76% John Lewis 25cm Frying Pan £20

Our testers thought this pan performed really well. It's pretty light but it feels stable on the hob and has a very comfortable, soft-grip handle. Heat distribution is excellent on both gas and electric hobs and it is the best of all our Best Buys at cooking food quickly and evenly.

WE FOUND This pan's non-stick coating is so good that even less oil is needed for cooking.

Cheapest store John Lewis **Weight** 0.8kg **Dishwasher safe** Yes **Oven safe** Up to 180°C **Hob types** Gas, solid plate electric, ceramic, halogen

Our Best Buys are terrific. They cook well and score highly

WHICH? BEST BUY

How we test

We put each pan through a series of rigorous tests to see whether it came up to scratch. This is a flavour of what we did

Durability

We tested the surface durability of each pan by rubbing it with an abrasive scourer with 15kg pressed on to it. We rubbed each pan 250 times, recording the amount of damage as we went.

Some pans claim to be dishwasher safe. We tested each pan by putting it in a dishwasher ten times, running the wash program with detergent on the hottest cycle.

heating it on a gas hob until it reached 200°C and used an infrared camera to measure the spread of heat. We then put the pans to the real test, frying up 14.5kg of bacon, 342 eggs, 11.4kg of tuna steak, 40 onions, 11kg of carrots, 9.1kg of peppers, 3.9kg of green beans, 12 litres of milk and eight litres of oil on gas and electric hobs.

We checked how quickly these items cooked; how good the pan's non-stick coating was; the weight, balance and feel of the pan on the hob; the comfort of the handle, and the shape and size of the pan's cooking area.

Cooking performance

We tested how well the pan surface distributed heat, to give an idea of how evenly the pan cooks food, by

SPECIFICATION		FEATURES		WHICH? TEST PERFORMANCE							SCORE %
PRICE (£)	WEIGHT (KG)	DISHWASHER SAFE	OVEN SAFE (°C)	COOKING SPEED/EVENNESS (GAS)	COOKING SPEED/EVENNESS (ELECTRIC)	NON-STICK COATING	HANDLE COMFORT	WEIGHT AND BALANCE	EASE OF CLEANING	DURABILITY	
42	1.3	✓	260	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	76
20	0.8	✓	180	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	76
50	1.2	see ^a	260	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	75
49	1	✓	230	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	74
15	0.6	✓		★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	74
30	0.8		180	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	69
27	see ^b	see ^c		★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	69
38	1.2		240	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	68
34	1	✓		★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	68
22	0.7	✓	180	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	68
36	1		180	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	67
73	2.6	✓	200	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	66
20	0.9	✓	240	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	65
20	1.5	✓		★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	63
12	0.7	✓	180	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	63
45	1	✓		★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	61
55	1.4			★★★★★	★★★★★	n/a	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	58
75	1.1	✓		★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	57
20	1.1			★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	57

recommended*



75% SKK Titanium 24cm Frypan £50

The SKK Titanium may be a rather ordinary looking pan but it's a very talented one.

The pan cooks quite quickly and evenly on both gas and electric hobs – its performance on solid plate electric hobs is especially impressive.

Like the Jamie Oliver Best Buy (1), the SKK Titanium is slightly heavy (at 1.2kg), yet it is very well balanced.

It's extremely stable on the hob and the grooved, plastic handle is easy to grip. And, again like the Jamie Oliver, you can put this pan into the oven up to a temperature of 260°C.

The SKK Titanium pan can be bought online.

WORTH KNOWING The SKK Titanium pan is shallow, so is perhaps not the best choice for voluminous recipes such as stir-fries.

Available www.armorica.co.uk **Weight** 1.2kg **Dishwasher safe** Not stated **Oven safe** Up to 260°C **Hob types** Gas, solid plate electric, ceramic, halogen



74% Berndes Bonanza Removable 24cm Frypan £49

The Berndes Bonanza is the only pan on test with an easily removable handle – a handy feature which makes storage, cleaning and cooking in the oven easier. The handle has an orange plastic button; click it into place and you can pull the handle off, although fortunately that's pretty much impossible to do accidentally.

The Berndes was good in our cooking tests but not outstanding. It feels good to use, though: not too heavy, with a comfortable, curved handle. It's a close second to the SKK (left) for stability on the hob and is available from John Lewis.

WE FOUND The Berndes scored the highest of all our Best Buys in our scratch and dishwasher tests.

Cheapest store John Lewis **Weight** 1kg **Dishwasher safe** Yes **Oven safe** Up to 230°C **Hob types** Gas, electric, ceramic, halogen, range cookers



EXCEPTIONAL
VALUE **which?**

74% Tefal Practica 26cm Frypan £15

The Tefal Practica is the lightest pan on test, weighing just 640 grams. This makes it very easy to lift. The handle also feels good, thanks partly to the soft rubber inserts that increase comfort and grip.

Stability on the hob is better than average, although like many pans it feels a little less stable on a gas hob than an electric one.

It cooks food nice and evenly but was slower on gas than most of the others on test.

None the less, this is a very good pan overall, and is great for people who might find it harder to lift a heavier pan. Available from John Lewis.

WE LIKED As with all the Tefal and Jamie Oliver pans on test, there is an effective 'ready spot' in the middle of the pan. This turns red when the pan is hot enough for frying.

Cheapest store John Lewis **Weight** 0.6kg **Dishwasher safe** Yes **Oven safe** No **Hob types** Gas, solid and radiant ring electric, ceramic, halogen

The SKK Titanium is slightly heavy yet very well balanced

WHICH?
BEST
BUY

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BUY

Looking after your pan

A few tips on how to make sure that your pan stays in the best possible condition for the longest possible time

- Before you first use your new frying pan, wipe the cooking surface with a little vegetable oil. This will increase the life of the non-stick coating.
- Avoid using metal utensils in your pan, and don't use a metal scourer when cleaning. If you do, eventually you will damage the non-stick coating.
- After cooking, make sure you wash the

remaining oil from the surface completely.

- Another way to make sure you protect your pan's non-stick coating is to avoid cooking over a very high heat.
- When you've finished cooking, always leave your pan to cool before washing it. If you keep plunging it into water immediately after using it, eventually it will buckle and the cooking surface will become uneven.

Contacts

Anolon/Circulon/Prestige/Select Advantage/Silverstone
0151 482 8282; www.meyergroup.co.uk

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01603 488019; www.berndes.com

Jamie Oliver/Tefal
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John Lewis
0845 604 9049; www.johnlewis.com

Kenwood
02392 392333; www.kenwoodworld.com

Le Creuset
0800 373792; www.lecreuset.co.uk

Marks & Spencer
0845 302 1234; www.marksandspencer.com

SKK www.sk24.com

White Heat Collection (MPW)
0121 580 8398; www.beka-cookware.com