



# The new wave

From those that roast chickens to perfection to models that are designed for the fanciest of fitted kitchens, we test the latest microwaves that are on the market

Built-in microwaves are increasingly chosen to save space in kitchens or if style is as important as function, so we've tested them for the first time. All three of the models are Best Buys but, while they may look great in modern kitchens, built-in microwaves are pricey.

If you're after a more affordable option, you could choose one of our Panasonic Best Buy microwaves that can be fitted into a kitchen unit using a trim kit that is sold separately.

While cooking with a microwave is still unlikely to meet Gordon Ramsay's approval, our latest test shows you can do

much more than heat up uninspiring TV dinners. Modern standard solo microwaves are perfect for tasks like reheating meals and defrosting food, but combination models include convection heating and grills, so you can cook more adventurous food such as roast dinners.

Some older and disabled people find microwaves easier to cook with than standard ovens, but not all are designed with their needs in mind. So we've checked all the models' controls, displays and instructions to see how easy they are for everyone to use.

**They may look great, but built-in microwaves are pricey**



**1 SOLO STANDALONE**

**85% Panasonic NN-SD466M £119**

While it may be a little pricey for a solo standalone microwave, you get what you pay for with this Panasonic. It reheats meals quickly and evenly without drying out food and it's consistent even when reheating several items in a row. Unlike most microwaves, it has superb auto buttons, so you can cook great pasta, curry or jacket potatoes simply by entering the weight. Although it is designed as a standalone, this model can be fitted into kitchen units using a trim kit. It's available from John Lewis.

**WE LIKE** The controls are clear and it's easy to operate for people with visual impairments and those who have difficulty gripping.

Cheapest store John Lewis Number of power levels 7 Recipes supplied Yes Delay start Yes Childproofing Yes

**WHICH? BEST BUY**

## What you should look for

### OVEN AND GRILL

Combination microwave ovens use convection heating (fanned hot air) and have grills, so you can use them to both cook and brown food

### CRISPER PLATE

This plate will help crisp pizza bases. You tend to get better results with frozen pizzas and by preheating the oven and plate for about five minutes before putting in the food

### AUTO-REHEAT BUTTONS

With these, you enter the weight of food and the microwave will calculate how long it will take to cook



## How we test

**We test to see whether our models really can do more than just heat up ready meals**

### Hot potato

We carry out many lab tests, including using probes to see how evenly the microwaves heat up meals and defrost meat.

Our testers also cook and taste food, such as jacket potatoes – it saves hours to microwave these compared with baking them in an oven. We cook the potatoes using auto buttons, then tuck in, considering ease of slicing and the



appearance and texture of the skin and flesh, as well as evenness of cooking.



2 SOLO BUILT IN

## 81% Neff H5430NOGB £353

This chic microwave is available built in only and comes in white, black or brushed steel. It's expensive, but it will look great in a modern kitchen. It takes a little longer than other Best Buys to heat a ready meal to a safe temperature, but it cooks evenly and consistently. The controls are a cinch to use, with large text and numbers. It's available online only.

**WHICH? BEST BUY**

**WORTH KNOWING** To get the best out of your microwave, you get a free recipe book.

Available Online only Number of power levels 5 Recipes supplied Yes Delay start No Childproofing No



3 SOLO STANDALONE

## 79% Sanyo EM-S3577 £65

This is our cheapest Best Buy and it's another excellent all-rounder. It's good at reheating a ready meal with virtually no hot or cold spots. It also cooks consistently after using it for long periods and from one day to the next. This microwave defrosts evenly and it has simple controls. It's available online only.

**WHICH? BEST BUY**

**WORTH KNOWING** Its auto buttons don't produce good results, so it's best to adjust the time and power settings yourself.

Available Online only Number of power levels 10 Recipes supplied No Delay start No Childproofing Yes



4 SOLO STANDALONE

## 75% Panasonic NN-T545W £89

This white standalone model is great at reheating ready meals to a safe temperature quickly, evenly, and while shrinking food less than other models on test. It has good auto buttons for heating curry or cooking jacket potatoes, and the auto defrost is great, too. It can be fitted into kitchen units using a trim kit. It's available from Comet and John Lewis.

**WHICH? BEST BUY**

**WE LIKE** It's easy to program – a step-by-step guide is displayed on the front panel so you don't need to dig out the instruction manual.

Cheapest store John Lewis Number of power levels 7 Recipes supplied Yes Delay start Yes Childproofing Yes



5 SOLO BUILT IN

## 74% Bosch HMT9626GB £365

You'll pay top whack for this built-in solo microwave but, if you're after style as well as one that's easy to use, this may be for you. It reheats food evenly without drying it out, but when used continuously the temperature can drop. It has easy-to-push buttons and large text and numbers. We'd recommend defrosting food manually with this model, rather than using the auto button. It's available online only.

**WHICH? BEST BUY**

**WE LIKE** You can adjust the length of bleeps, making them easier to hear – good if you're in another room.

Available Online only Number of power levels 5 Recipes supplied Yes Delay start No Childproofing No



10 COMBINATION BUILT IN

## 87% Zanussi ZMC30STQX £465

This stylish built-in stainless steel model will slot nicely into the latest kitchen units. It's a great all-rounder, too. It reheats quickly, evenly and consistently. It doesn't have an auto-defrost button but the manual settings defrost evenly. The controls are a doddle and it has an easy-to-open drop-down door. It's available online only.

**WHICH? BEST BUY**

**WE LIKE** This microwave has an oven and grill to rival your main oven. It cooked a crispy, golden chicken in half an hour and it grills food evenly over a large surface area.

Available Online only Number of power levels 5 Recipes supplied No Delay start No Childproofing Yes

The  
cheapest  
Best Buy  
– Sanyo – is  
an excellent  
all-rounder



11 COMBINATION STANDALONE

## 75% Panasonic NN-CT766MBPQ £200

This is a microwave that does the simple jobs well and has the added bonus of a good oven and grill. It reheats quickly and evenly, as long as it's not used continuously, and it's simple to use. We cooked an appetising roast chicken in 40 minutes and its auto button is ideal for heating up pasta. It's available from Argos, Comet and Robert Dyas.

**WHICH? BEST BUY**

**WORTH KNOWING** Defrosting food with the auto button works much better than if you program the microwave manually.

Cheapest store Comet Number of power levels 6 Recipes supplied Yes Delay start Yes Childproofing Yes

## Don't Buy



Following our testing, we advise you against buying the Sharp R85ST (15). Results show this model struggles with simple microwave tasks like cooking a ready meal without drying it out. It defrosts unevenly and we were unimpressed with our jacket potato when we used the auto button. And if you're planning to cook several meals one after another, each for the same length of time, the second or third meal may not be cooked properly.



## The way we were



You can reheat, grill and roast in a modern microwave, but when Which? first tested them in 1975 they were good only for 'quick snacks and defrosting and heating up food'. Back then a basic model cost £259 – more than £1,400 in today's money; you can pick up one of today's Best Buys for £65.



### Contacts

**Baumatic** 0118 933 6900  
www.baumatic.co.uk  
**Belling** 0871 222 2503  
www.belling.co.uk  
**Bosch** 0870 240 0060  
www.boschappliances.co.uk  
**Hinari** 0161 621 6900  
www.hinari.co.uk  
**Kenwood** 023 9239 2333  
www.kenwoodworld.com  
**Neff** 0870 240 0080  
www.neff.co.uk  
**Panasonic** 0870 535 7357  
www.panasonic.co.uk  
**Sanyo** 01923 246363  
www.sanyo.co.uk  
**Sharp** 0800 262958  
www.sharp.co.uk  
**Zanussi-Electrolux**  
0870 595 0950  
www.zanussi.co.uk



## Facts & scores

We found several ways to cook during testing

### Soup sizzler

Both Panasonic solo models have a turbo reheat function that is suitable for soup.

### Slow cooker

The Baumatic takes the longest to heat up a ready meal to a safe temperature – 6 minutes 50 seconds.

### Pack them in

The Zanussi comes with a Pyrex dish and a square glass roasting dish with rails, so you can cook several things at once.

### MORE ON MICROWAVES

### FREE website access

### Already tested...

For more on these models and models that have been tested previously, visit [www.which.co.uk](http://www.which.co.uk). If you haven't logged on to our website before and would like some help, go to [www.which.co.uk/loginhelp](http://www.which.co.uk/loginhelp) for our step-by-step guide.

### USING THE TABLE

We tested widely available mid- and top-of-the-range combination and solo microwaves from the leading manufacturers. The more stars, the better. All our microwaves

scored five stars for ease of use.

### Specification

**Price** For Best Buys we give the cheapest widely available high-street price as we went to press. Prices for other models are a

guide to what you can expect to pay. Online prices are in *italics*. **Built in** Those models designed to be built in to kitchen units. **Max plate size** The largest diameter plate that will fit through a microwave's door without tilting.

### Test performance

**Speed of cooking** How long it takes a microwave to heat a ready meal to a minimum safe temperature of 70°C. **Quality of food** The more the food shrinks during heating, the lower a microwave's score.

MODEL		SPECIFICATION					
		PRICE (£)	SIZE (cm) (hwxwxd)	BUILT IN	MAX PLATE SIZE (cm)	SPEED OF COOKING	QUALITY OF FOOD
SOLO							
1	PANASONIC NN-SD466M	119	30x51x38	see <sup>a</sup>	35	★★★★★	★★★★★
2	NEFF H5430N0GB	353	34x45x32	✓	29	★★★	★★★★
3	SANYO EM-S3577	65	31x51x42		32	★★★★	★★★★
4	PANASONIC NN-T545W	89	30x51x38	see <sup>a</sup>	35	★★★★★	★★★★★
5	BOSCH HMT9626GB	365	30x51x38	✓	34	★★★★★	★★★★★
6	SHARP R26ST	79	28x46x36		29	★★★	★★★★
7	HINARI MX706ECCR	50	29x46x36		28	★★★★	★★★★★
8	BELLING BEL-ST517	40	28x46x35		28	★★	★★★★
9	BAUMATIC BTM17.355	125	30x46x34		28	★	★★★
COMBINATION							
10	ZANUSSI ZMC30STQX	465	48x60x50	✓	33	★★★★	★★★★★
11	PANASONIC NN-CT766MBPQ	200	31x51x48	see <sup>a</sup>	35	★★★★★	★★★★★
12	BELLING BEL-CJ/SS25	100	31x51x41		33	★★★	★★★
13	KENWOOD KEN-CJ/AL28	150	33x52x48		33	★★	★
14	SANYO EM-C6786	200	33x52x48		32	★★	★
15	SHARP R85ST	170	30x52x49	see <sup>a</sup>	33	★★	★

<sup>a</sup> Can be built in to kitchen units with a trim kit (not included)

## Overall, our Best Buys are suitable for older and disabled people

# Microwaves for all

We test all models to find those that are easier for disabled and older people to use

All the microwaves are simple for most people to use, which we know by checking how easy it is with each to set the clock, use power and time controls, read the display, clean the microwave and follow its instructions.

But some older and disabled people have needs to help them do these everyday tasks.

So we've checked how easy it is for people with visual impairments or conditions like arthritis to operate each model. Tests are based on guidance from Ricability – the Research Institute for Consumer Affairs, an independent charity that publishes information on products that are suitable for disabled people.

Microwaves that score top marks for people with visual impairments (see table below) are clearly labelled, have large text and bleep each time a button is pressed so you can count through the settings.

Those models that get five stars for people with limited use of their hands or arms have doors that

are easy to open and controls that can be pushed as well as gripped without too much force.

Overall, our Best Buys are suitable for disabled and older people. In particular, the top-scoring Panasonic solo (1) has well laid-out controls and symbols that are easy to understand.

WHICH? TEST PERFORMANCE											SCORE %
EVENNESS OF COOKING	CONTINUOUS HOT OVEN	DEFROST	SIGHT	DEXTERITY	CHICKEN	GRILL	AUTO BUTTONS				
							PASTA	CURRY	POTATO	DEFROST	
★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	n/a	n/a	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	85
★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	★★	81
★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	n/a	n/a	★	★	★★	★	79
★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	n/a	n/a	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	75
★★★★	★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	★	74
★★★★	★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	★★★★★	★★★★★	68
★★★★	★★★★	★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	n/a	n/a	★	★	★	★	67
★★	★★★★	★★	★★★★★	★★★★	n/a	n/a	★	★	★★	★★★★	60
★★★★	★★★★	★	★★★★★	★★★★★	n/a	n/a	★	★	★★★	★★★★	53
★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★	★★★	★★★	n/a	87
★★★★★	★★★★	★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★	★★	★★★★	75
★★★	★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	n/a	n/a	★★★	★	59
★★★★	★★★★	★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★	★	★★	★★★★	58
★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★	★	★★★★	★★★★	53
★	★	★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	n/a	n/a	★★	n/a	38

### Evenness of cooking

Whether a ready meal is left with any hot and cold spots when it's been heated. **Continuous hot oven** How well a ready meal cooks in an oven that has been used for 15 minutes – you get poorer

results if you use the oven continuously. **Defrost** How evenly each microwave defrosts mince. **Sight** How suitable the ovens are for people who have visual impairments. **Dexterity** How suitable the oven is for people with

limited use of their hands or arms. **Chicken** How well the oven roasts a whole chicken. **Grill** How widely and evenly the grill browns slices of white bread. **Auto buttons** How well the auto buttons, where present, cook pasta, curry

and jacket potatoes as well as defrost food.

### Score

Ignores price and based on:  
**Solo microwaves**  
 Reheat in cold oven **44%**  
 Ease of use **28%**  
 Defrost **22%**

Reheat in hot oven **6%**

### Combination microwaves

Reheat in cold oven **40%**  
 Ease of use **25%**  
 Defrost **20%**  
 Reheat in hot oven **5%**  
 Grill **5%**  
 Oven **5%**