



# King of the grill

Have a great summer and save money by getting a beautiful Best Buy barbecue for less than £100

A barbecue is a must-have for summer but the range is vast and prices can reach £24,000 at the top end of the market. We wanted to find out what you'd get with a more modest £100 budget.

We've tested seven gas and four charcoal barbecues on sale for £100 or less on the high street, in DIY stores and online. Detailed results for all the models on test are available online at [www.which.co.uk/barbecues](http://www.which.co.uk/barbecues), but in this report we concentrate on Best Buys and best value-for-money barbecues (see 'Worth considering', p76).

To find the top grills, we tested how easy they were to assemble. The results were very varied – the quickest, the Best

Buy Weber One Touch Silver, took just 20 minutes, while the most troublesome, the Tesco two-burner gas barbecue, took an hour and 20 minutes.

We asked a professional chef to see how easy the barbecues were to use, how evenly and consistently they cooked food and how the food tasted. We also challenged 40 volunteers to see whether they could taste the difference between gas models and traditional charcoal grills (see 'How we test', below, for the results).

So, whether you prefer gas or charcoal, our tests show you can get a great barbecue for less than £100. But with so many models to choose from, stick to our Best Buys for sizzling results.



## THE SEASON OF GOOD GRILL

**John Trenholm 47, photographer**

Barbecues can be used to cook a lot more than just burgers. Why not take a leaf out of John's book and do the Christmas dinner on it. John is adventurous with his barbecue – homemade pizza, flatbreads, rib-eye steaks and even the Christmas turkey are just some of the culinary delights he has grilled. He can be found cooking outside all year round and in all weathers. 'I see it more as an outdoor oven,' he said. 'I enjoy getting outside and barbecuing, it's a way of relaxing at the end of the day.' John suggests cooking with the lid closed to maximise the flavour and recommends a barbecue with a built-in thermometer to monitor the temperature of the grill.

## How we test

### So which tastes better: gas or charcoal?

We asked 40 volunteers to take part in a blind taste test to see whether they could tell the difference between food cooked on gas or charcoal barbecues.

We cooked the same brand of sausages on both and challenged our volunteers to taste the difference.

Two tasters couldn't tell the difference, and 17

favoured the charcoal-cooked sausages, but 21 preferred those cooked on gas.

Our results show that you can still achieve a traditional smoky barbecue taste with either gas or charcoal – using our Best Buys, of course.



## COMPETITION

### Win a Best Buy barbecue pack worth more than £320

We are giving one lucky reader the chance to win a Best Buy barbecue, the Weber One Touch Silver, Waitrose vouchers worth £200 and a barbecue recipe book, *Weber's Art of the Grill*. We also have four pairs of Waitrose vouchers worth £50 to give away as runners-up prizes.

#### TO ENTER, SIMPLY ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTION:

According to our test report on barbecues, the Weber One Touch Silver was straightforward to assemble in only:

- a) 20 minutes
- b) 30 minutes
- c) 45 minutes.

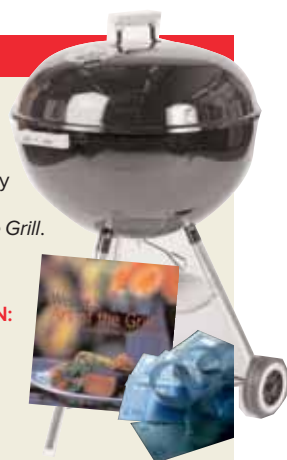
To enter our Best Buy competition online, go to [www.which.co.uk/bestbuycompetition](http://www.which.co.uk/bestbuycompetition) or send your entry on a postcard to 'Best Buy July 08', Which?, PO Box 44, Hertford X SG14 1SH.

Include your name, address and postcode, daytime phone number and Which? membership number (found on your Which? membership card as your user name). Entries received by 17 July 2008 will be entered. Our competition is open only to current

Which? members. Only one entry per household.

Usual rules apply. See [www.which.co.uk/bestbuycompetition](http://www.which.co.uk/bestbuycompetition) or Which?, December 2007, p 82, for a full set of rules.

Congratulations to the winners of our May competition: Miss K Ward, Waltham Cross; Mr RS Hill, York; Mr P Kinane, Weybridge; Mr GP Curwell, Stourbridge; Mr GP Lacey, Romford.





CHARCOAL

## 85% Antony Worrall Thompson Living Medium Charcoal Grill £99.99



This kettle-drum-style barbecue came top in our tests. It was easily assembled by one person in 25 minutes, quick to reach cooking temperature and praised by our chef for its ease of use and cooking performance. It is lightweight and easy to manoeuvre so wouldn't be any trouble to wheel into a shed or garage. A lower shelf and condiment rack are useful for resting plates and tools, and a short booklet with recipe ideas is supplied. Cheapest at Robert Dyas. **WE LIKE** A weather cover is supplied to help protect it in bad weather.

**Available** Littlewoods, Next, Robert Dyas, Wyevalle and online **Size** (hxxwx) 93x58x66cm **Accessories** Warming rack, ash collector, air vents, barbecue cover



CHARCOAL

## 80% Weber One Touch Silver £99.99



This kettle grill makes it on to our Best Buy list for the second year running. It was straightforward to assemble in only 20 minutes, thanks to the clear and concise instructions. Our chef liked the large circular grill – food looked and tasted great, and the deep charcoal bowl retained heat well. The One Touch is light and easy to move around but does need two hands to steady the body and hold the lid when going up or down steps. A large range of accessories is available including a side table, poultry roaster, rib rack and vegetable basket. Cheapest online. **WORTH KNOWING** Also available in Sage and Grey (£109.99). Cover not included.

**Available** B&Q, Homebase, Next, Wyevalle, independent garden centres and online **Size** (hxxwx) 96x58x63cm **Accessories** Ash collector, air vents, barbecue cover



GAS

## 75% Outback Omega 200 Gas – Modern Classic £99.99



Another comeback king from our 2007 trial, this two-burner gas barbecue rightly deserves its Best Buy status. It was simple to put together in just 25 minutes thanks to several pre-assembled pieces. Ignition was easy and the grill reached cooking temperature in less than 10 minutes. Food was cooked quickly and evenly and had a nice smoky flavour thanks to the lava rocks. Cheapest online. **WORTH KNOWING** A gas regulator (see 'What you should look for', p76) isn't supplied so you'll need to buy one before you can use it. They cost around £10 from DIY stores.

**Available** Independent garden centres and online **Size** (hxxwx) 104x120x49cm **Accessories** Fat collector, lava rocks

# How to care for your barbecue

We show you how to give your barbecue the best chance of a long life

### GENERAL CLEANING

- Make sure your barbecue is totally cool before cleaning.
- Use hot soapy water and a soft cloth to clean the barbecue body. Rinse with clean water and wipe dry.
- Clean the grill using hot soapy water. Any tough food residues can be removed with a cream cleaner.

### GAS BARBECUES

- After cooking, turn the burners on full to burn off any

residue on the lava rocks.

- Gas burners should be thoroughly cleaned once a year or when there's a heavy build-up of grime.
- Clean the outside of the burners with a wire brush and use a pipe cleaner or thin wire to clean out the portholes.
- Check the gas hose regularly and replace if it becomes perished.

### CHARCOAL BARBECUES

- Line the bowl with foil to

make it easier to clean after use. Don't obstruct the air flow or cover up ventilation holes.

- Use a fine water spray to extinguish burning coals.
- Empty the ash collector after use when the ashes are cold. Dispose of ashes, when cold, with your household waste.

### STORAGE

- Don't store until it is cool.
- Store in a dry place.
- Use aluminium foil to cover gas burners in storage.

## WHICH? GARDENING

## Get the help you need in the garden this summer

Providing expert advice, tried-and-tested techniques and tons of inspirational ideas, *Which? Gardening* is the ideal companion for gardeners – whether you're a green-fingered guru or just getting started.



To get three issues for £3, call 01992 822800.

## FUEL YOUR KNOWLEDGE

### All you need to know about charcoal and gas

#### Charcoal

■ You can buy charcoal as either lumpwood (burns fast and hot) or briquettes (burn slowly and for longer). Lumpwood is good for quickly cooked burgers and sausages, while briquettes are good for slow roasting.

■ Expect to pay about £3 for 5kg of briquettes. On a medium-sized grill, this should be enough for two barbecues.

■ Look for Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)-certified charcoal from managed forests or UK-sourced charcoal.

■ Lighter fluid must be used with great care. Never squirt on to burning coals. Firefighter blocks

are a safer alternative.

■ Store in a waterproof container away from sources of heat or ignition.

#### Gas

■ Gas bottles (13kg) can be hired for around £50 and swapped for a full one once they've run out – refills cost about £20. They're available from petrol stations, DIY stores and some garden centres.

■ A 13kg gas bottle lasts for around nine barbecues and costs about £1.50 to £2 an hour to run.

■ Gas bottles must be stored outside or in a garage or shed. Store in a well-ventilated area, away from sources of heat or ignition.

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## Worth considering

### Best on a budget

#### ARGOS TWO-BURNER GAS BARBECUE WITH SIDE TABLE £50

At only £50, this two-burner gas barbecue is a simple, value-for-money grill that just missed out on being a Best Buy. Lava rocks spread the heat uniformly and helped food cook evenly and taste great. Our chef liked the transparent window in the hood, which allows you to keep an eye on the food without opening the lid. Side shelves were also handy. It was effortless to move around and, thanks to a slimline frame, it won't take up much space. The only snag is that it took an hour to assemble. Visit [www.which.co.uk/barbecues](http://www.which.co.uk/barbecues) for more.



### Contacts

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Weber 01756 692600  
[www.weber.eu](http://www.weber.eu)

### OUR RESEARCH

We choose the barbecues under £100 by talking to makers about bestselling models. We consult industry experts and check which models are available in main high-street shops and online. Visit [www.which.co.uk/barbecues](http://www.which.co.uk/barbecues) for the full range of barbecues we tested.

## What you should look for

The main features you need to keep an eye on when you buy

### Gas and charcoal

#### ■ GRILL

This can be wire or cast iron. Cast iron is more durable but heavy to remove for cleaning (see photo below).



#### ■ HOOD

Use closed to roast or smoke your food.

#### ■ SHELVEING

Useful for resting plates, tools or condiments during cooking

#### ■ TEMPERATURE GAUGE

Monitors the heat of the grill when cooking with the lid closed (see photo above right).



#### ■ WARMING RACK

Use to keep food warm away from direct heat and warm up sausage or burger buns.

### Gas

#### ■ BURNERS

These are positioned under the grill on gas barbecues. They heat up the grill directly or heat a vaporiser bar or lava rocks.

#### ■ FAT COLLECTOR/DRIP TRAY

This is located under the grill on gas barbecues to collect juices and fat from the cooking grill.

#### ■ LAVA ROCKS

These absorb and spread the heat evenly on gas barbecues. Juices dripping on to hot lava

rocks evaporate, producing smoke and helping to give food a traditional barbecue flavour (see photo below).



#### ■ REGULATOR

Attaches to the gas bottle to regulate gas flow. The type of regulator required depends on the type of gas used. Check your instruction booklet.

#### ■ SIDE BURNER

Present on some gas barbecues such as the Tesco two burner and the B&Q Laguna models – use to heat sauces (see photo right).

#### ■ VAPORISER BAR

This alternative to lava rocks is positioned over the gas flame, and generates the barbecue taste as fat/juices drip on to the hot vaporiser.

### Charcoal

#### ■ ASH CATCHER

Positioned under the grill on charcoal barbecues to collect ash and fat.

#### ■ AIR VENTS

Help control the temperature. Open vents to make coals burn faster and hotter. Always light the barbecue with vents open.

