

A CONSUMER GUIDE TO GRILL BUYING



Quite simply, there are barbecue grills for every need, budget, and lifestyle. You want high quality, reliability, safe performance, and durability – and of course, you seek value.

There is a wide world of outdoor cooking choices available, from basic, popular-priced grills with some of the most-used features, to super premium models with every bell and whistle.

Our purpose is to provide useful information to help you evaluate your needs, check your budget, and shop for the outdoor appliance that nearly all of us own.

BEFORE YOU BUY

- Decide if gas, charcoal, pellet, or electric best suits your needs.
- How important are optional features? (Are you into basic burgers or are you an adventuresome gourmet griller?)
- What about style? (Will your grill be a backyard centerpiece or just a useful appliance?)
- How about available budget? Traditionally, home centers, mass merchandisers or hardware stores have offered a wide range of grills for those shopping by price – but many specialty retailers now carry grills at all price points, including those in the premium grill category. The biggest difference is that specialty retailers may offer more one-on-one service.
- Here's a big question: how will the grill fit into your future plans for the backyard? Do you simply want a new grill, or will it become the focus of an outdoor room you plan to create? If the latter, you may want to consider a premium grill to which modular units can be added.
- Assess the available cooking area of various models: do you cook outdoors often? Do you typically barbecue for just your family? Do you frequently entertain larger groups? An ample cooking space is 400 or more square inches.

There's a lot to consider, but regardless of your choice you'll know why Americans will fire up their grills billions of times this year!

GAS GRILLS – THE EASY, CONVIENENT CHOICE

Gas grills have gained popularity because they're ready to cook on in 10 minutes. A gas grill makes it easy to regulate the heat and to cook at several different temperatures at the same time. The more burners a grill has the more cooking flexibility you'll enjoy, but choose a grill with at least two so you can do indirect cooking. You can cook with the lid open or closed.

Gas grills come in various sizes. Grills with small footprints are ideal for a terrace or townhouse. If you have the space, look for a 30-inch, 42-inch or even bigger stainless steel model. These usually offer add-on modules or appliances like wet bars, refrigerators, wine coolers, sear stations and more.

Stainless steel is the most durable material and impervious to weather, while stainless steel cooking grids, burners and other parts clean up easily, won't rust, and last longer.

Cast aluminum grill bodies, usually found with a powder-coat finish, require less cleaning time than stainless steel and retain heat better. Porcelain-coated steel is another good alternative.

The most popularly priced gas grills sell for between \$129 and \$299. Grills with more features can run from \$700 to \$1,500, while top-of-the-line, all-stainless steel appliances can easily top \$5,000.

CHARCOAL – THE TRADITIONALIST'S CHOICE

Some people swear charcoal cooking produces better flavor. Charcoal can create a high temperature for searing, but also can be used for "low and slow" cooking. In addition, you can build a fire on just one side of the grill for indirect cooking. Your charcoal grill also can double as a smoker.

Charcoal grills come in all sizes and shapes. They range from small covered cookers with adjustable-height cooking grids, to kettle grills with domed lids high enough to cook a whole turkey, to huge powder-coated steel models.

Basic units sell for \$50 to \$100; deluxe models sell for \$400 or more.

PELLET – IT'S ALL ABOUT THE FLAVOR

Many people haven't yet heard of pellet grills, but as gas prices continue to rise, they're becoming increasingly popular. Small wood pellets, in a variety of "flavors" such as hickory, mesquite, and oak, provide the energy source and infuse the food with flavor from the resultant smoke. Pellet grills are especially attractive because they are energy efficient and clean burning.

Some pellet grills have a dual-fuel unit that can switch over to gas which can reach higher temperatures than pellets. Increasingly, these models include microprocessor-based circuit boards that manage the grill's entire operation including temperature regulation.

Prices for pellet grills generally range from about \$600 to \$2500.

ELECTRIC – HIGHER PERFORMANCE AND IDEAL FOR AN EVOLVING DEMOGRAPHIC PATTERN

Electric grills have come a long way – improved technology has resulted in vastly improved performance. These grills are as easy to turn on as your kitchen stove. Some models can reach 700 degrees – great for searing steaks! A small electric grill may be the only option for apartment or condo dwellers. Wherever you plan to put an electric grill, have an outlet nearby, as an extension cord will greatly reduce grill performance.

Electric grills begin at about \$150 for a small unit that is ideal for a couple or a downsized household. Larger, high-performance, high-end stainless steel models cost \$1,800 to \$2,000.

SMOKERS GAIN IN POPULARITY – THE IDEAL SECOND (OR THIRD) 'GRILL'

Cylindrical water smokers are a good choice for beginners since they are affordable and easy to use. Whether made of powder-coated or porcelain-coated steel, or stainless steel for premium models, these versatile grills feature stacked sections so lots of food can be smoked at once. Some allow the bottom section to serve as a regular grill.

Charcoal is the favorite fuel for smokers, but electricity and gas are convenient because they maintain more consistent temperatures while requiring less attention. A water pan placed directly over the source of heat ensures that foods will stay moist even after hours of cooking.

Horizontal dry wood smokers made from powder-coated, heavy-gauge steel resemble two black barrels set side-by-side. The smaller barrel – the firebox – connects to the larger cooking chamber with an opening for the smoke and hot air to pass through for "low and slow" indirect cooking. There are also smaller single chamber models, some lighter in weight. They can run from about \$100 to several hundred dollars, depending on size and material.

The third type of smoker is a **kamado cooker**, an egg-shaped, thick-walled ceramic grill. Most are charcoal fueled, and their ceramic insulation traps heat, making them inexpensive to operate. They can be held as low as precisely 180 degrees for

WHAT'S A GRILL TO DO?

Charcoal grill – A grill that uses charcoal for fuel

Dual-fuel grills – Some grills now provide the option of cooking with gas and/or other fuels

Electric grill – An indoor or outdoor grill; heat comes from an electric coil element, so it requires access to an electrical outlet

Gas grill – An outdoor grill heated by liquid propane (LP) gas or natural gas

Infrared grill – These grills use infrared radiant energy to produce very high heat very quickly; they also operate with uniform heat, resulting in consistent cooking. These grills are fueled with natural gas or LP

Kamado cooker – Egg-shaped ceramic cookers that are charcoal-fired; they originated in the Far East

Kettle grill – Round or nearly round charcoal grill with a cover; typically stands on three legs

Pellet grill – An outdoor grill that uses wood pellets for fuel

Portable grill – Any grill small and lightweight enough to be carried to a barbecue event; they range from aluminum foil throwaway grills to stainless steel models

Smoker – Charcoal, wood, a combination of both, electric, or natural gas or LP can fuel smoker grills, which are available in numerous configurations

Turkey Fryer – Can be fueled by LP gas or electricity; is filled with oil for frying, or can be used to boil or steam foods

smoking to as high as 800 for searing and grilling. Space-age ceramics make these grills virtually indestructible. It is possible to find a kamado cooker that is gas fueled, though that is much less common, and also at least one that is constructed of stainless steel. Kamados come in many sizes and prices will range from about \$200 to more than \$1,000.

YOU'RE IN A VERY LARGE CLUB

Whatever your choice in grills or smokers, you are part of a huge universe: nearly 74 million U.S. households have at least one barbecue grill. Welcome!

NOTE: For detailed information on a specific type of grill, go to www.hpba.org, click on *Manufacturers*, then select from the *product category, company or brand name menus*