



## **BUYERS GUIDE**

### **WHICH GRILL TO BUY, CHARCOAL OR GAS? IT'S A LIFESTYLE CHOICE**

This is really your first decision. Are you convinced there's nothing like the taste and smell of food grilled over hot coals? Do you take a certain pride in your ability to get the fire started and keep it properly tended while you cook? Do you need that hands-on, primal experience?

Or do you want a perfect fire at the push of a button? Do you appreciate the precision temperature adjustments gas grills can provide? Would you rather avoid the whole charcoal set-up and the post-cookout ashes?

Whether you're in the charcoal or gas grill camp, you're in luck. Taste tests indicate there's no significant flavor difference either way. The choice is strictly personal. Consider how you plan to use your grill. Will you grill every night or just on special occasions? Will that change over time? Is cost an issue? While gas grills are initially more expensive, they generally cost less to operate in the long run. Both are great choices. Pick the one that's right for you!

### **WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A CHARCOAL GRILL**

Okay, you've got the fever. But do you have the right grill? Remember, your food's only going to be as good as your grill, so make sure a one-time bargain doesn't turn into a long-term disappointment. Invest in a good grill and you can focus on dinner, not your toolbox.

#### **The Elements of a Charcoal Grill**

The beauty of a charcoal grill is its simplicity. At the core of a good charcoal grill is a charcoal grate to place the fuel on. Above that is a cooking grate. A lid with air vents tops it off. Simple and uncomplicated.

#### **Solid Construction**

A good, well-built grill will feel solid and sturdy; a poorly made grill will wobble. If a grill isn't solid on the sales floor, chances are it will fall apart rather quickly on the patio or deck. Choose a grill made of high grade U.S. steel. Also opt for a baked-on, porcelain-enamel finish. The legs should be sturdy, wheels should roll easily, and the grill should display a good fit and finish.

Cooking grates are generally made from heavy-duty plated steel or chrome-plated aluminum. A thicker, heavier-gauge cooking grate will last longer and distribute and retain heat better. Grates coated with porcelain enamel are a common step-up feature. The best grates are made of cast iron, stainless steel, or porcelain-coated aluminum or cast iron.

#### **Assembly**

When you buy a barbecue you want to grill, not drill, so fast, easy assembly is a priority. Some grills require hours (and an engineering degree) to assemble. Better brands reduce or eliminate the amount of assembly required by the consumer.

#### **Service & Maintenance**

Top-notch after-market service supports any quality made grill, including thorough, easy-to-read information about the product, and a toll-free service line. A good grill is easy to clean and to maintain, and long-life is assured by easy access to replacement parts and service through a well-established servicing dealer network.

#### **Safety**

A good grill controls heat easily, has handles that stay cool to the touch, and has added safety features.

#### **Long Warranty**

It makes sense: the best manufacturers can afford to stand behind their products. Don't settle for less than a 10-year warranty.

## WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A GAS GRILL

Besides price, what separates an ordinary gas grill from a great gas grill? Here are a few points savvy grill shoppers should know.

### The Elements of a Gas Grill

The basic underpinnings of a gas grill are really quite simple: First come burners to create heat. Above them you'll find some type of system to disperse the heat from the burners (Flavorizer bars, ceramic briquettes, lava rock, etc.). Above those lie the cooking grates. Let's look under the hood to get a better sense of what you should be looking for.

### The Cooking System

Better grills generally have two or more separate burners (not just control knobs) which allow greater control of heat. Most lower-priced grills have only one burner shaped like an H or a bar, some with one control, some with two controls. Grills with one burner don't allow you to control heat as well as grills with multiple burners and may result in hot and cold spots on the cooking surface.

When cooking on a gas grill, juices from the food drip down and accumulate near the heat source until they reach a flash point and burn off. The best systems quickly flash the drippings, eliminating flare-ups and creating flavorful smoke. Most manufacturers rely on lava rock or ceramic briquettes to distribute the heat from the burners to the cooking surface. Drippings from the food tend to pool in these systems causing undue flare-ups. The best grills use a steel bar system (pioneered by Weber) that funnels the grease away from the burner flames, greatly reducing flare-ups.

### BTUs (British Thermal Units)

BTUs are not a measure of cooking power. They indicate the volume of gas a grill can burn. Tightly engineered grills use fewer BTUs and cook food more efficiently. Sometimes less is more. Too many BTUs can cause damage to burners and reduce the life of the grill. In general, large grills with large cooking surfaces require higher BTUs.

### Solid Construction

A good, well-built grill will feel solid and sturdy; a poorly made grill will wiggle. If a grill isn't solid on the sales floor, chances are it will fall apart rather quickly on the patio or deck. Choose a grill made of high grade U.S. steel. Also opt for a baked-on, porcelain-enamel finish. The cart should be sturdy, wheels should roll easily, and the grill should display a good fit and finish.

Cooking grates are generally made from heavy-duty plated steel or chrome-plated aluminum. A thicker, heavier-gauge cooking grate will last longer and distribute and retain heat better. Grates coated with porcelain enamel are a common step-up feature. The best grates are made of cast iron, stainless steel, or porcelain-coated aluminum or cast iron.

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### Safety

A good grill lights effortlessly, controls heat easily, has handles that stay cool to the touch, and has added safety features.

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### Added Conveniences

Optional side burners are great for cooking sauces and other dishes. Flip-up side tables give you extra space for food preparation.