

## BUYING A BARBEQUE

With the sun shining and the BBQ season about to start in earnest are you ready to step up to the BBQ plate? This month we bring you top considerations when buying a new gas or charcoal grill.

Prepare to amaze your family and friends as you knowledgeably question the super salesman in your local hardware store!

So here's how to buy the best barbeque with the pros and cons of gas and charcoal grills explained:

Whether you opt for a gas or charcoal barbecue is largely a matter of personal preference.

### Charcoal barbecues

Choose charcoal if you want a traditional, authentic outdoor cooking experience and don't mind waiting a while before you start cooking. Charcoal is ideal for weekend barbecues and get-togethers with family and friends where the barbecue will be the centre of attention.

Expect to pay around €5 for 5 kg of charcoal briquettes; on a medium (family) sized barbecue this will be enough for two barbecues.

### Gas barbecues

Choose gas if you want instant heat for quick, easily controlled cooking. Gas is ideal for mid-week or after work barbecues where you want to get going fast.

Gas bottles are hired for around €50 (13Kg) and swapped for a full one once they've run out - this will cost around €20/ €25. They're readily available from petrol stations, DIY stores and some garden centres and will cost around €1.50-€2 per hour to run.



Charcoal barbecues give your food an authentic smoky taste

### Size

If you're catering for a family (up to six people) a two-burner gas barbecue or medium-sized charcoal grill should be sufficient.

For larger gatherings and parties consider a larger three-burner barbecue. Not only are they bigger but they're heavier to move around, so think about how much storage space you've got and how much you're

going to want to move it.

Think about what you'll be cooking.

***Look at the June recipe page for fantastic BBQ & marinade recipes***

Sausages and burgers will cook happily on any standard grill. If, however, you want to roast whole joints, choose one with a spacious hood and check there's enough room on the grill when the lid is closed. Some barbecues come with a spit for roasting whole chickens.

A window in the hood is a useful feature that allows you to check on food without opening the lid.

If you like to cook fish, choose a barbecue with a griddle/ hot plate - you'll still get the same smoky flavour without the fish falling through the grill.

To ensure optimum flavour, choose a barbecue with a vapouriser bar, or one with lava rocks. Both help produce that familiar smoky barbecue taste. Juices dripping on to the hot vapouriser or lava rocks evaporates, producing smoke which flavours food on the grill.

**Features to look for when buying a barbecue:**

Vents on charcoal barbecues help to control how hot the coals burn. They're useful if the grill height is fixed and you can't raise or lower it above the coals.

Not all barbecues have a warming rack. The rack is handy for resting food away from the direct heat of the barbecue or for warming up buns.

Not all gas barbecues supply a gas regulator as standard and you can't barbecue without one. They cost around €15 to buy separately.



Gas barbecues give you instant and easy-to-control heat

**Assembly considerations:**

Some barbecues require more construction than others. If you're not handy with a screwdriver, look out for those with pre-assembled parts - this will save you time and frustration.

Ask to see the instructions in the shop - if they're not clear in the store, putting it together back at home could prove lengthy.

**Cleaning:**

A fat collector or drip tray located under the grill on gas barbecues will cut down on time spent cleaning. The larger the drip tray the better!

An ash catcher that sits under the grill and collects fat and ash will make it easier to clean a charcoal barbecue. Check that the ash catcher is removable.

**Price:**

Charcoal barbecues can cost less than a tenner for a small, basic grill and only around €40 for a small kettle-drum-style grill. Expect to pay more if you're after special features like a griddle or hot plate.

Gas barbecues are more expensive than charcoal. A small, basic two-burner grill costs from €60 but expect to pay in the region of €150 for one with a side burner and additional features.