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SAVVY SHOPPER

How to buy a grill Options abound; choose what fits your lifestyle best

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Grilling season is firing up across America, and most everyone seems hungry to enjoy outdoor cooking. But to grill, you have to have, well, a grill — be it a one-time disposable number picked up at the supermarket or a pricey state-of-the-art grill that puts your kitchen stove to shame. When it comes to buying a grill, there are plenty of options to suit your taste, your lifestyle and your budget.

And there are enough new features, gadgets and whatnots for the grill to keep your family and guests talking while you seat up those steaks and burgers. First, though, consider the type of grill you want. Here are some of the options outlined by the Hearth, Patio & Barbecue Association, an industry trade association based in Arlington, Va.

Gas. “The easy, convenient choice,” the association notes, that can be ready to cook in 10 minutes. Regulating the heat, even cooking at different temperatures, is simple to do. Some 62 percent of households with a grill picked a gas grill, according to the figures compiled by the association in 2015.

Josh Davis of Abt Electronics said one hot feature this summer is Weber’s Sear Station, which Weber-Stephen Products’ website defines as “basically three burners that are closer together than the other burners on the grill. What this does is create a zone on the grill that can get hotter much faster than other areas, which is great for speeding up the time it takes to get the grates hot enough for searing.”

Charcoal. About 53 percent of households with a



LYNX

Available in freestanding, built-in or ready-to-finish island forms, Sedona by Lynx Grills is an easy go-to option for both novice and experienced grillers. Models start at \$1,899 at www.lynxgrills.com.

grill in 2015 used a charcoal model (some households have multiple grills), and some users, as the association notes, “swear charcoal cooking produces better flavor.” Charcoal can be used for high-temperature searing and “low and slow” cooking, the association notes, adding the grill can double as a smoker.

Pellet. Only 2 percent of households with grills were using wood-pellet grills in 2015, but the association noted this style was growing in popularity. “Pellet grills are attractive because they are energy-efficient, clean-burning, and the temperature is steady,” notes the association.

Davis named pellet grills and other smoker-type

grills as the big trend this summer. The wood pellets, he said, come in different flavors like hickory, oak, maple, pecan and oak.

“People are intrigued by the concept, that it can burst flavor into their cooking with these wood-pellet flavors,” he said. Davis points to pellet grills made by Traeger Pellet Grills of Wilsonville, Ore.; they plug into an electrical outlet. The pellets are fed by an auger into the “fire pot” at a given rate, where they ignite and start the cooking process.

Kamado. Kamado-style grills have “excellent insulation allowing them to reach both low and high temperatures, which is ideal for both grilling and

smoking,” according to the association. It is another of Davis’ hot grills for summer, particularly the Kamado Joe brand of Duluth, Ga. He likes how the ceramic lining holds in the flavor of the foods as they cook. These grills can use wood or charcoal, the association noted, and can be used to roast and bake “similar to an indoor oven.”

Other considerations. Cooking outdoors like cooking indoors may sound kinda funny, but there’s a hunger out there among certain consumers to have all the culinary options available to them on their patio, balcony or deck. Daniel Chin, marketing director for Lynx Grills,



WEBER

The Weber Q is small but mighty. The portable grill comes in six bright colors and has a folding cart that allows you to take the grill anywhere for on-the-go grilling. \$199, www.weber.com



ABT ELECTRONICS

The Traeger Bronze Pro Series 34 Wood Pellet Grill easily holds: 24 burgers, six chickens, 32 hot dogs or nine rib racks for wood-fired grilling. \$999.99, www.abt.com

said customers of the upscale brand are not just passionate about grilling but passionate about creating the “perfect scenario” for themselves. They want “a fully realized outdoor kitchen,” he said, noting the Napoli Pizza Oven and griddles are some of the company’s most popular items.

Whether your grill is “smart” or no, the association suggested in a buying guide that you take into consideration what kind of griller you are (or want to be). Choose your must-haves accordingly. Among them are “side burners, porcelain or cast-iron cooking grates, rotisserie burners, smoke burners and even enclosed tanks.”

Think, too, of the acces-

sories you need. A 2015 consumer survey conducted by the association showed nearly half of all grill owners have the basics: cleaning brush, tongs, glove or mitts. Other accessories in demand include a pizza stone, a fish or broiling basket, and cedar or other cooking planks.

Finally, the association recommends considering your grilling space, as grills are being made to fit into all sorts of spots. “Grills are measured in square inches and should directly correlate with the location you want to grill,” the association notes, adding an “ample” cooking space is 400 square inches or more.

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