

Buying guide – Mixers

A mixer is an appliance that may not be a kitchen essential for everyone, but they definitely come in handy when doing baking of any kind. With such a large selection available and varied reviews, it can be difficult to choose which mixer is best, so we hope that this guide will help make the decision a little easier.

Hand Mixer or Stand Mixer

There are two different types of food mixers and which one you choose will probably depend on the quantities you will be mixing, or how often the appliance will be used. Hand mixers are best for occasional use and smaller quantities – these mixers are handheld, as the name suggests, and are very compact so are perfect for small kitchens. The Dualit hand mixer even has a retractable power cord which can be wound up inside the appliance making storage even easier. Stand mixers are larger appliances which sit on the worktop and they can handle much larger quantities. Some stand mixers can also do much, much more than just mix when extra attachments are used. Read more on attachments in Accessories.

Cost

Mixer prices start at around £40 but can reach £700+!

Capacity

A stand mixers capacity depends on the size of the bowl which is included with the appliance, and these can range from 3.9 litres right up to 6.9 litres which will whisk up to 19 medium egg whites! As hand mixers do not have a fixed bowl they cannot be sold with a set capacity, but due to their small size it would be silly to expect them to tackle too much.

Motor/Power

With appliances such as stand mixers the wattage of the power does not always indicate the efficiency of the appliance. Some mixers feature direct drive motors which use less power but can handle large quantities and run for extended periods of time and are usually a lot quieter when in use. Other mixers have motors which are driven by belts, and these motors use more power – direct drive motors feature in the KitchenAid range of mixers.

Mechanism

The way a mixer head mixes varies from model to model. A basic mixer may only have one mixing action where the mixing head is centred in the mixing bowl, whereas a higher-priced unit may have a head which moves in a spiral or rotating action, and these actions cover a wider mixing area and get closer to the side of the bowl. The KitchenAid stand mixers feature 'planetary action' which is a very thorough action and mixing times are lessened.

Speed

Mixers are not always used for the same job so the ability to change the mixing speed is very important. The Bosch Styline mixer (MUM52120GB) has four speed settings, the Tefal Kitchen Machine mixer (QB403D40) has six speed settings and the KitchenAid Artisan mixer (KSM150) has ten speed settings.

Weight

Handheld mixers are obviously a lot lighter than stand mixers, as they need to be comfortable to hold and easy to manoeuvre. Stand mixers need to be quite weighty so that they do not move around on the worktop, and some can be quite awkward to move around and users often choose to keep stand mixers out on the kitchen side instead of moving the mixer to and fro.

Accessories

Most mixers will come with a whisk and a dough hook as standard, but some can be transformed into food processors with attachments such as slicers and graters. KitchenAid offer a whole range of accessories and attachments for their Artisan stand mixers including a food grinder (FGA), an ice cream maker (KICA) and even a sausage stuffer (SSA). Extra bowls of different capacities and materials (ie. Glass) are also available to fit the KitchenAid mixer.

Colour/Style

Retro styling is still incredibly popular and very much in fashion. This is reflected in the look of many mixers which are on the market today, most prominently the mixers by KitchenAid, and their Artisan mixer is available in over 25 colours. The Bosch Styline mixer (MUM52120GB) is far more modern looking with sleek lines and wouldn't look out of place in a minimalist kitchen.