

# TEST LAB MICROWAVES



TEST LAB PICKS NINE SOLO, GRILL AND COMBI BEST BUYS AND LOOKS AT THE BEST WAYS TO STEAM



## STEAMY BUSINESS

**LG MP9289NSD** £400  
**TYPE** Combi with steam  
**WHICH? TEST SCORE** 59%  
 Steaming takes a long time, filling the water tray is fiddly and water collects around the food. It's not a bad combi, but we weren't impressed with the steaming.

Built-in steaming is the hot new trend in microwaves, but Which? tests suggest you'll be better off waiting for the technology to evolve. The LG MP9289NSD, which costs £400, is the latest steam combi, but when Test Lab tried out the steam feature, the food was no better than when we used a cheap steaming dish in a standard solo microwave. It is the second such microwave we've encountered – the first was by Panasonic and has since been

discontinued. Now that LG has launched its own version, it seems the technology is likely to continue developing.

The LG doesn't use a steaming dish – the whole oven cavity has to heat up. Potatoes took 40 minutes, but were still underdone, and food came out wet and unappetising.

There are more effective ways to steam in a microwave. For example, the Best Buy Whirlpool JT366 grill (£200) comes with a steaming dish and automatic steaming

program, which is quicker, easier to use and more energy efficient. See 'Alternative options: steaming dishes and electric steamers', p31, for more ways to steam.

Which? members tell us they're willing to pay about £85 for a solo microwave, £110 for one with a grill and up to £170 for a combi (which can heat like a normal oven). Accordingly, we've featured Best Buys in these price ranges, including the Goodmans PE20S, which is exceptional value at £45. Here, we show just nine of the microwaves that we've tested – there are many more at [go.which.co.uk/microreview](http://go.which.co.uk/microreview).

PHOTOGRAPH BY DENNIS PEDERSEN



**LOOKING FOR MORE BEST BUYS?** Our microwaves review includes results for 126 microwaves, with 40 Best Buys including 13 from Panasonic. You can read the whole review online at [go.which.co.uk/microreview](http://go.which.co.uk/microreview).

## How we test

We test how well all microwaves heat and defrost. We make toast and roast chickens in grill and combi models, bake cakes in combis and check how easy each is to use.

## Microwave baking

You can bake cakes in your microwave and you won't need a combi or a grill model to do it. Pick up tips and recipes on microwave baking at [go.which.co.uk/microtips](http://go.which.co.uk/microtips)

## Microwave accessories

Accessories can make cooking easier and don't cost much. Check out our advice guide for fish steamers, rice steamers and pasta dishes at [go.which.co.uk/microbits](http://go.which.co.uk/microbits)



## GOODMANS PE20S £45

**WHICH? TEST SCORE** 80%

**PROS** This solo microwave from Goodmans is great value at just £45. For that you get a microwave that features seven automatic cooking programs and two defrost programs – and it does the basic heating and defrosting tasks very well. You can cook in stages by setting the microwave to defrost first and then heat. It has touch-panel controls that are easy to wipe clean and it features a handy 24-hour delay timer.

**CONS** You have to push the button hard to open the door and the display isn't great.

**FULL REVIEW** [go.which.co.uk/microreview](http://go.which.co.uk/microreview)

**WHICH.CO.UK TARGET ONLINE PRICE** £40

**CHEAPEST HIGH STREET STORE** Comet

**ALSO AVAILABLE AT** Online and independents



## SHARP R-27STM £79

**WHICH? TEST SCORE** 73%

**PROS** This Sharp microwave re-heats food well and, unlike some models, prolonged use doesn't affect its cooking power, which is helpful if you're heating one ready meal after another. If you're looking to defrost, using the manual setting is best. The interior of the oven is very well lit, so it's easy to keep an eye on your food as it cooks. It comes with a stainless steel finish, push-button and rotary controls and a digital display.

**CONS** The auto-defrost program isn't very good and it's quite complicated to program.

**FULL REVIEW** [go.which.co.uk/microreview](http://go.which.co.uk/microreview)

**WHICH.CO.UK TARGET ONLINE PRICE** £75

**CHEAPEST HIGH STREET STORE** Dixons

**ALSO AVAILABLE AT** Online and independents



## SAMSUNG MW82N-B £70

**WHICH? TEST SCORE** 71%

**PROS** Samsung's striking black and silver solo Best Buy is another good all-rounder available at a reasonable price. It comes with traditional, easy-to-use rotary controls for heating power and cooking time and an easy-to-read digital display. There are three automatic defrost settings for different types of food, which work well. It also has a large protruding handle that makes the door easy to open and close.

**CONS** It's quite hard to see your food while it's cooking and there's no child lock.

**FULL REVIEW** [go.which.co.uk/microreview](http://go.which.co.uk/microreview)

**WHICH.CO.UK TARGET ONLINE PRICE** £58

**CHEAPEST HIGH STREET STORE** Comet, Currys

**ALSO AVAILABLE AT** Online and independents

95%

of Which? members own a microwave

£45

the price of the Goodmans PE20S – the cheapest Best Buy in this test

8%

of Which? members with a grill function use it frequently

## ■ DON'T BUYS The not-so-hot models

The Sanyo EM-S155AS 29% (£55) solo (pictured right) is the lowest-scoring model we tested. Food wasn't hot enough after the recommended cooking time and lost 15% of its weight, ending up dry. The model is easy to use and defrosting manually works well, but it failed our basic heating tests.

The Daewoo KOC-1B5K 34% (£111) combi is another heating test failure. The Cookworks SEB177G3H-P 36% (£50) solo also failed our heating tests and left food too dry. The Sharp R-890SLM 36% (£169) combi doesn't heat fast enough in microwave mode. See the table on p31 for more.



# TEST LAB MICROWAVES



THE BEST BUYS FOR GRILL AND COMBI OVENS - PANASONIC COMES TOP OF THE COMBIS

## LG steam microwave video

The new LG MP9289NSD is a combination microwave, grill and convection oven, and features an integrated steamer. Check out our video at [go.which.co.uk/lgmp9289](http://go.which.co.uk/lgmp9289)

## Healthy eating

Because microwaves steam food quickly and don't use much water, fewer vitamins are lost. Broccoli retains 91% of vitamin C when steamed, but only 46% when boiled.

## Which? helpline

For more information on all the microwaves we've tested, give our Which? members' telephone helpline a call on 01992 822800 (Mon-Fri 8.30am-6pm and Sat 9am-1pm).



GRILL

which? BEST BUY

### WHIRLPOOL JT366 £200

WHICH? TEST SCORE 78%

**PROS** The Whirlpool JT366 comes with its own steamer, an automatic steaming program and recipe ideas on a CD. There's an excellent grill and it's also good in microwave mode.

**CONS** The stainless steel interior is quite difficult to keep clean.

**FULL REVIEW** [go.which.co.uk/microreview](http://go.which.co.uk/microreview)

**WHICH.CO.UK TARGET ONLINE PRICE** £200

**CHEAPEST HIGH STREET STORE** N/a

**ALSO AVAILABLE AT** Online and independents



GRILL

which? BEST BUY

### LG MH6589UR £109

WHICH? TEST SCORE 69%

**PROS** The LG grill microwave delivers good heating, defrosting and grilling. There are 12 auto-cook and five defrost programs, a digital display and an iPod-style rotary control.

**CONS** Setting the auto programs is quite tricky, so keep the user manual close by.

**FULL REVIEW** [go.which.co.uk/microreview](http://go.which.co.uk/microreview)

**WHICH.CO.UK TARGET ONLINE PRICE** £109

**CHEAPEST HIGH STREET STORE** N/a

**ALSO AVAILABLE AT** Online and independents



GRILL

which? BEST BUY

### JOHN LEWIS JLF5MWG002 £159

WHICH? TEST SCORE 67%

**PROS** This model is excellent in microwave mode and the grill works reasonably well when used with the microwave. There are quick re-heat and deodorising programs.

**CONS** The buttons are quite small, making the controls tricky if you have large hands.

**FULL REVIEW** [go.which.co.uk/microreview](http://go.which.co.uk/microreview)

**WHICH.CO.UK TARGET ONLINE PRICE** £159

**CHEAPEST HIGH STREET STORE** John Lewis

**ALSO AVAILABLE AT** John Lewis only



COMBINATION

which? BEST BUY

### PANASONIC NN-CT559W £154

WHICH? TEST SCORE 78%

**PROS** This model is great in microwave mode. Power doesn't drop off after prolonged use, defrosting is impressive too, as are baking with convection and combination cooking.

**CONS** It has a relatively small grilling area.

**FULL REVIEW** [go.which.co.uk/microreview](http://go.which.co.uk/microreview)

**WHICH.CO.UK TARGET ONLINE PRICE** £141

**CHEAPEST HIGH STREET STORE** John Lewis

**ALSO AVAILABLE AT** Argos, Comet, Currys, online and independents.



COMBINATION

which? BEST BUY

### SAMSUNG CE137NTM-B £209

WHICH? TEST SCORE 70%

**PROS** This is a large combi and the slide-in oven shelves make best use of the space. Baking and grilling are excellent and the microwave mode is reasonably good. The cooking guide inside the door is helpful.

**CONS** Defrosting is only satisfactory.

**FULL REVIEW** [go.which.co.uk/microreview](http://go.which.co.uk/microreview)

**WHICH.CO.UK TARGET ONLINE PRICE** £209

**CHEAPEST HIGH STREET STORE** N/a

**ALSO AVAILABLE AT** Online only



COMBINATION

which? BEST BUY

### BREVILLE VMW141 £130

WHICH? TEST SCORE 68%

**PROS** The Breville combi works well both as a microwave and as a grill and is good value for a combi. Convection and combination cooking results were mixed.

**CONS** The stainless steel and glass looks great but it's tough to keep clean.

**FULL REVIEW** [go.which.co.uk/microreview](http://go.which.co.uk/microreview)

**WHICH.CO.UK TARGET ONLINE PRICE** £130

**CHEAPEST HIGH STREET STORE** Argos

**ALSO AVAILABLE AT** Online and independents

## Alternative options: steaming dishes and electric steamers

Using a steaming dish is the cheapest way to steam in a microwave. We tested an easy-to-use multi-steamer (£8.49) from Lakeland (pictured right), and the food it produced was just as good as that steamed on the hob.

Microwaves don't have room to steam large quantities of food at once, but what they lack in space they make up for in speed. Lakeland also

sells pasta dishes and fish steamers for microwaves (see p54 for contact details).

If you steam a lot of food, an electric steamer could be a good option. The Tefal Simply Invents VC101616 Best Buy, (£45), has three tiers for different foods, while the Best Buy Morphy Richards Intellisteam 48780 (£100) uses compartments instead.



SPECIFICATION	WHICH? TEST PERFORMANCE												
	SIZE (CM) (HXWDXD)	MAX PLATE SIZE (CM)	RE-HEATING	CONTINUOUS USE	MANUAL DEFROST	AUTO DEFROST	JACKET POTATO	GRILL	MULTI-FUNCTION	CONVECTION	EASE OF USE	SCORE (%)	
<b>MICROWAVE ONLY</b>													
1 <b>GOODMANS PE20S</b>	45	26x44x33	27	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★	n/a	n/a	n/a	★★★★	<b>80</b>
2 <b>SHARP R-27STM</b>	79	28x47x37	30	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★	★★★★	n/a	n/a	n/a	★★★★	<b>73</b>
3 <b>SAMSUNG MW82N-B</b>	70	28x50x39	30	★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	n/a	n/a	n/a	★★★★	<b>71</b>
4 <b>SANYO EM-S155AS</b>	55	24x46x32	29	★	★	★★★★	★★	★★★★	n/a	n/a	n/a	★★★★	<b>29</b>
<b>GRILL</b>													
1 <b>WHIRLPOOL JT366</b>	200	38x49x48	39	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	n/a	★★★★	<b>78</b>
2 <b>LG MH6589UR</b>	109	29x51x40	33	★★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★	n/a	★★★★	<b>69</b>
3 <b>JOHN LEWIS JLF5MWG002</b>	159	31x52x40	35	★★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★	★★★	n/a	★★★★	<b>67</b>
<b>COMBINATION</b>													
1 <b>PANASONIC NN-CT559W</b>	154	31x52x52	35	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	<b>78</b>
2 <b>SAMSUNG CE137NTM-B</b>	209	33x56x55	36	★★★★	★★★	★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	<b>70</b>
3 <b>BREVILLE VMW141</b>	130	28x49x39	31	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★	★★★	★★★	<b>68</b>
4 <b>LG MP9289NSD</b>	400	39x53x47	43	★★★	★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	<b>59</b>
5 <b>SHARP R-890SLM</b>	169	31x53x49	33	★	★	★★★	★★★	★★★★	★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	<b>36</b>
6 <b>DAEWOO KOC-1B5K</b>	111	35x57x51	37	★	★	★★	★★★★	★★★	★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	<b>34</b>

## Using the table

### Specification

**Price** See p27. **Size** May differ from claimed size. Doesn't include clearance space. **Max plate** Largest plate to fit in without tilting.

### Test performance

**Reheating** How long a ready meal takes to reach 70°C, whether it shrinks during heating, and if hot or cold spots are left.

**Continuous use** Shows whether reheating performance deteriorates after 15 mins.

**Manual/auto defrost** How evenly the microwave defrosted 500g of mince.

**Grill** Whether food was browned evenly.

**Multi-function** Tested on whole roast chicken. **Convection** We used fairy cakes to test how evenly the heat was distributed.

**Jacket potato** On manual program.

**Score** Ignores price and is based on:

<b>Microwave only:</b>			
Reheating	50%	Grill	15%
Manual defrosting	25%	Multifunction	10%
Ease of use	25%	<b>Combination microwave:</b>	
<b>Grill microwave:</b>		Reheating	30%
Reheating	40%	Ease of use	20%
Ease of use	20%	Manual defrosting	15%
Manual defrosting	15%	Convection	15%
		Multi-function	10%
		Grill	10%