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The Best Rice Cooker

UPDATED DECEMBER 21, 2017

Your guides

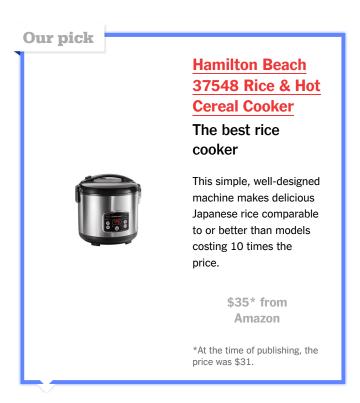
Tim Barribeau Karen Solomon

After more than 100 hours of research and testing, cooking more than 200 pounds of rice, and talking with rice experts specializing in Japanese, Thai, and Chinese cuisine, we recommend the Hamilton Beach 37548 Rice & Hot

<u>Cereal Cooker</u> for most people. It makes delicious short-grain and medium-grain white rice faster and better tasting than models 10 times the price. It's also one of the only inexpensive cookers we tested that offers features like a delay start and stay warm function, and that comes with a large, sturdy cooking pot.

Last upuateu: December 21, 2017

Our top pick, the <u>Hamilton Beach 37549 Digital</u>
<u>Simplicity Rice Cooker and Steamer</u>, was discontinued and replaced with the near-identical <u>Hamilton Beach</u>
<u>37548 Rice & Hot Cereal Cooker</u>. We <u>tested this newer model</u> and confirmed it's the same rice cooker we love, just with a new setting for hot cereals.



Our new pick, the Hamilton Beach 37548 Rice & Hot Cereal Cooker, is an updated version of last year's winner, the Hamilton Beach 37549, which has been discontinued. After testing the two cookers side by side, making multiple batches of three different kinds of rice on four settings, we confirmed that it's essentially the same cooker. It makes great rice, and it cooks faster than most of the other models we tested. If you usually cook white rice, you don't need an expensive machine with high-end features such as induction heating and pressure cooking. For most people, the Hamilton Beach does everything you want at an affordable price.



Cuckoo 10-Cup Electric Pressure Rice Cooker

Great for frequent cooking and brown rice

Pressurized cooking, substantial construction, and lightning-fast delicious results make this the right cooker for the demanding cook and the serious rice eater.

\$220 from Amazon

If you make rice a couple times a week or are particularly discerning about rice texture and flavor, consider the Cuckoo CRP-G1015F 10-cup Electric Pressure Rice
Cooker. Because it's a pressure cooker, it makes both white and brown rice far faster than the competition. We found that the texture and flavor of the cooked rice is also unsurpassed by similar cookers at this price. It's built more solidly than the Hamilton Beach and offers more cooking options, but that's only worth the significant extra cost if you make rice a couple times a week.

Also great



Versatile but slower

This is the only cooker we found that did a great job at all types of rice. But it cooks almost twice as slow as the Cuckoo.



\$135 from Amazon

*At the time of publishing, the price was \$142.



want to cook brown rice or cook rice frequently. It's still one of the best machines available and was the only machine we found that makes short-grain, brown, and long-grain white rice well. Zojirushi is a very well-known and trusted brand in rice cookers, and their machines are built to last. That said, this is also a very slow machine. (It'll cost you nearly two hours for a batch of brown rice!) The Zojirushi NS-TSC10 is more versatile than our main pick (the Hamilton Beach) and also a bit cheaper than the Cuckoo, so we think it's a good alternative should the Cuckoo sell out.

The Research

Why you should trust us

In order to get a firm grasp on what we needed to look for in a rice cooker, we turned to the experts. For our 2013 review, we spoke with Japanese food writer and restaurateur Harris Salat; James Beard Award-winning Seductions of Rice co-author Naomi Duguid; Thai restaurateur Saipin Chutima (another James Beard Award winner); and Fuchsia Dunlop, Chinese cuisine expert and the author of Every Grain of Rice: Simple Chinese Home Cooking. For this update, we also spoke with Beth Hensperger, author of The Ultimate Rice Cooker Cookbook, as well as famed chef/restauranteurs Sunhui Chang of FuseBOX in Oakland and Sylvan Mishima Brackett of Izakava Rintaro in San Francisco.

Additionally, we looked at online reviews (there weren't many good ones). We researched the newest technologies and available models from the largest and the smallest manufacturers, including Zojirushi, Tiger, Aroma, Korean superstar Cuckoo, and many other smaller brands.

Karen Solomon is a food writer and cookbook author of three titles, including <u>Asian Pickles</u>. Solomon formerly lived in Japan, studying its culture, language, and cuisine, and she has traveled around Asia. For over 20 years she has cooked rice in a rice cooker (an ancient <u>National SR-GE10N</u>) at least three times a week. Tim Barribeau, who wrote our original guide, spent three months interviewing authors, researching the science of starch, doing blind taste tests with Japanese chefs and everyday people, and cooking more than 125 pounds of rice to pick the best rice cooker.

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While rice cookers have their roots in Japanese, Korean, Chinese, and other Asian cuisines, they've become a frequently-used tool for many international cooks, including those preparing Latin American dishes. Here in the US, rice cookers are essential to Hawaiian cookery and Cajun cuisine.

Rice cookers can dramatically improve the quality, flavor, and texture of rice. Great rice cooker rice is really, really delicious—aromatic, nutty, earthen, and with a broad depth of flavor—and quite easy to make. If you want the ease of one-step cooking with delicious results while you put together the rest of dinner, it may be time to buy one. Another bonus for many cooks: rice cooker cooking is unburnable. It's much easier to clean a rice cooker insert than burnt-on rice in a cooking pot.

If you only eat rice infrequently (and especially if you almost always eat Japanese-style white, short-grain, or medium-grain rice) a \$40 model will do more than enough. But if you plan to make a lot of brown rice or experiment with other types of grains, you may want a more advanced cooker, which can range from \$100 to upwards of \$400.

A rice cooker is also perfect for people who don't cook often or who don't enjoy it. An entire meal can be cooked in a rice cooker by simply cooking the rice and putting some meat, tofu, fish and vegetables in the steamer tray. (Roger Ebert wrote a book on this kind of rice-cooker cooking called **The Pot and How To Use It**.) Many rice cookers can now make polenta, slow-cook stews, or steam things like tamales or dumplings.

How we picked

While rice cookers aren't known for being faster than cooking rice in a pot, they shouldn't be painfully slow, either.

A good rice cooker should cook delicious, fluffy, flavorful Japanese-style rice (meaning short-grain or mediumgrain white rice) evenly throughout the pot every time.

materials to stand up over time. The lid should have a tight seal to maintain steam and temperature. It should also cook consistently: one cup of rice should taste as good as cooking rice to maximum capacity. While rice cookers aren't known for being faster than cooking rice in a pot, they shouldn't be painfully slow, either. A good appliance should also have some convenient features, such as delayed start, keep warm, and quick cook settings. And ideally, a good rice cooker should be easy to clean and easy to use.

For many users, these criteria are enough. But if you're a cook who likes to make a variety of grains, your cooker should be able to make them with equal aplomb, whether it's brown rice, GABA-style rice (brown rice soaked and germinated for hours thought to release additional nutrients), jasmine rice, long-grain rice, quinoa, millet, or more. The capability to cook a variety of grains is what separates the good cookers from the great. Be prepared to spend about \$150 for a model that can accomplish this task.

Many issues haunt the poor-quality models. The cheapest models (around \$20) simply turn on and off, with a keep warm setting that often turns off automatically in just a couple of hours. They have loose-fitting lids that allow steam and moisture to escape, resulting in rice that's too wet on the bottom and too dry on top. Poor-quality models don't maintain a steady internal temperature throughout the cooking process because the heating elements are only at the bottom of the pot, resulting in uneven rice. Low-end choices often include shoddy materials.

Higher-end models come equipped with a lot of functionality beyond just on/off. While many rice cookers simply rely on heat cooking, upmarket models weigh the rice and adjust the cooking time intelligently. Newer models also use <u>induction cooking</u>, meaning the cooking element creates a magnetic field that constantly transmits heat within the entire pot, not just at the bottom, for more even cooking. Some very high-end models pair induction cooking with pressure cooking for faster cooking and improved flavor and texture, but often at a tremendous price beyond the scope of most home cooks (\$400 or more).

A higher-end cooker should have a keep warm function that will kick in after cooking (as will many pure electric, on/off models, though the features usually shut off after a cook functions for fast midweek cooking—an essential tool because rice cookers cook to perfection and not for speed. Many in this category also have a plethora of settings: different types of rice, doneness preferences (such as more tender or more firm), preset timers for rice so it's ready when you are, settings for porridge (also known as congee or jook, a rice soup).

On the high end, some machines can sell for up to \$800. Some of these can do everything from bake a cake to make yogurt, and Cuckoo even makes one that features control via mobile phone. Neat, but we're not sure why you need an app to make rice. The very high-end machines often have a large countertop footprint. Note that a high price tag is not necessarily indicative of value. Buyers should beware of paying for bells and whistles that they won't use.

Any rice cooker insert worth its salt is going to be nonstick; most have non-stick aluminum inserts. Thinner pots tend to wear out more quickly and lose some protective coating. The steaming trays of all four of the finalists that were tested extensively were plastic.

We looked for cookers with solid, tightly-sealed lids and heavy, quality cooking pots. We also selected models with a minimum five-cup cooking capacity; many users report that they make extra rice, and 5-10 cups seems like the right amount for two to four people with leftovers. We also chose to only look at models that have a brown rice option and, to help save time for busy cooks, a quick-cook setting for speed and convenience.

Our top pick from 2013, the Hamilton Beach Digital

Simplicity Deluxe Rice Cooker/Steamer has since been discontinued, so we didn't test it again this year. Instead, we re-tested our 2013 pick for frequent cooking—the

Zojirushi NS-TSC10— against nine new players: the Hamilton Beach 37541 4-to-20-cup Digital Simplicity Rice

Cooker and Steamer; the Hamilton Beach 37549 2-to-14-cup Digital Simplicity Rice Cooker and Steamer: the

Zojirushi Induction Heating System Rice Cooker & Warmer

NP-HCC18; the Cuckoo CRP-G1015F 10-cup Electric

Pressure Rice Cooker; the Tatung TAC-11QN 11-cup

Multi-Functional Stainless Steel Rice Cooker; Tiger's 10-cup Micom Rice Cooker and Warmer with Tacook Plate

and 5.5-cup Induction Heating Rice Cooker and Warmer

with Tacook Plate; the 8-cup VitaClay Smart Organic

How we tested



Rice cooker testing at San Francisco's Ken Ken Ramen. Photo: Tim Barribeau

For our original 2013 review, we first tested the cookers informally with some home cooks. Then we conducted a formal group taste test with the chefs from Japanese restaurant Ken Ken Ramen in San Francisco. Heading the panel were chefs Takahiro Hori and Yuichiro Aramki; both are Japanese and have years of experience under their belts, including time making sushi. Alongside them were other restaurant employees and co-owner Robert Patterson. Between the panelists' backgrounds and their restaurant's menu (which involves bento boxes and Japanese curries), they were extremely knowledgeable about rice.

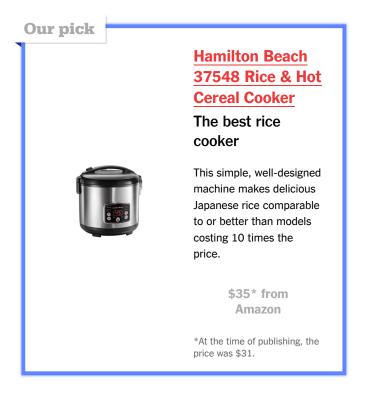


For the white rice tests, we rinsed rice of starch, dust, and any other particulate matter before cooking. Photo: Tim Barribeau

For this update we didn't perform a panel testing, but in each of the 10 cookers we made a batch of Japanese white rice—likely the most critical and the most-used skill for a

and cooking speed in this test, they moved on to three other tests (see below). For the Japanese rice tests, we washed the rice of its exterior starch for one full minute and then drained for one full minute before cooking (we didn't wash the brown or long-grain white rice). Here are details on each of the tests:

- Test 1 Japanese rice: We cooked 3 Japanese rice cooker cups (which are actually about ¾ cup in US measurement, or about six ounces by volume) of medium-grain Nishiki brand rice, one of the most popular and widely available brands of Japanese rice available in North America. We followed manufacturer's instructions for water, meaning the pot was filled to the 3-cup line inside the rice cooker. After cooking, the rice sat for 10 minutes (time not included in overall in our cooking time chart) and then it was stirred before tasting. The rice was cooked on either white rice, white/sushi, plain, or glutinous settings, depending on the manufacturer.
- Test 2 brown rice: 3 regular cups of Lundberg brand short grain brown rice were cooked with $4\frac{1}{2}$ cups water. We chose short-grain brown rice because it seems to yield much better results in a rice cooker. We also used a 1:1½ ratio of rice to water for a better texture. The rice cooker setting was either whole grain, brown, or mixed/brown, depending on the manufacturer.
- Test 3 long-grain rice: 3 regular cups of Mahatma brand long-grain white rice were cooked to a ratio of 1:1½ rice to water (4½ cups of water) for a better texture. Again, we used this brand because of its quality and its national availability. None of the machines had a setting for long-grain, so we selected the same settings for Japanese rice.
- Test 4 quick cook Japanese rice: 3 Japanese rice cooker cups (about six ounces by volume) of mediumgrain Nishiki brand rice, with water to manufacturer's instructions (filled to the 3-cup line in the pot of the rice cooker) were washed and drained as in Test 1. After cooking, the rice was stirred before tasting. We used the Quick cook setting on all machines except the Cuckoo, which does not have a quick cook function (but, thanks to its pressure cooking, cooks faster than all of the other models).



The Hamilton Beach 37548 Rice & Hot Cereal Cooker is the best value for most people because it offers tremendous functionality for the price. Above all, it makes short-grain or medium-grain white rice as delicious as models that cost four times as much. The construction feels solid, and it cooks more quickly when compared to most of the competition (it was the second fastest cooker we tested). With a 14-cup capacity, the Hamilton Beach is much larger than many other machines at this price. Additionally, it's a pleasure to house on almost any kitchen countertop: its sleek stainless and black design makes it look like a more expensive model, and it's more well-contained in a small footprint than most. It delivers on features that we thought a great rice cooker should have: a timer, stay-warm functions, a tight lid, and a heavy, quality cooking pot. For the majority of home cooks seeking a useful, manageable tool to make delicious white rice at a great price, it will be tough to beat this Hamilton Beach machine.

Japanese rice from the Hamilton Beach is everything that rice fans crave: aromatic, sweet, and with a texture that grain.

The Hamilton Beach makes Japanese-style rice and quick-cooked Japanese rice on par with the Zojirushi, Tiger, and Cuckoo machines we tested that cost three or four times as much. Japanese rice from the Hamilton Beach is everything that rice fans crave: aromatic, sweet, and with a texture that preserves the integrity of every grain. Even on the quick rice setting, this machine delivers surprisingly excellent, soulful rice. Long-grain rice and brown rice are cooked satisfactorily.

Many rice cookers under \$50 leave a lot to be desired. Rare is the well-priced cooker with an insulated lid to hold in steam and keep food warm for hours, but the Hamilton Beach does both with alacrity. Low-priced cookers are often single switch on/off affairs, whereas the HB has multiple advanced functions, such as settings for brown rice and quick-cooked rice. Few at this price point have the HB's delayed start time capability or its ability to slow cook or steam cook vegetables, meat, beans, soups, and stews.

And speed! For white rice, this was the second fastest cooker we tested (after the Cuckoo); just 32-34 minutes stands between you and flawlessly-cooked rice. This was over 10 minutes faster than both the Zojirushi and the Tiger models, and only 3-5 minutes longer than the Cuckoo, the fastest model we tested. Brown rice took just an hour (nearly half the time of the Zojirushi) and the same length of time it takes to cook it on the stove.

When it comes to cooking time, the Hamilton Beach 37548 is the clear winner for the price.

Additionally, many rice cookers under \$50 max out at a three-cup capacity. The Hamilton Beach's 2-to-14-cup capacity is surely adequate for most families who make rice to feed 2 to 14 people.

If you plan to leave this cooker on your countertop, its look and overall footprint will also be a welcome addition to your kitchen. The design is black and stainless to slip seamlessly into the countertop landscape next to the toaster and the blender. Round, $10\frac{1}{4}$ inches tall, and about 9 inches in diameter, it feels smaller than the 14-inch long and rectangular Zojirushi or Tiger machines.

incredibly similar to our former top pick, the now discontinued Hamilton Beach 37549 Digital Simplicity Rice Cooker and Steamer. Our former Hamilton Beach pick had an optional keep warm mode, but the new one does that automatically after your food has finished cooking. It also offers a new hot cereals setting, but that appears to be exactly the same as its heat/simmer setting. According to the manual, both will heat food and then simmer it for an adjustable amount of time. As for the most important function—making fluffy, delicious rice—the two Hamilton Beaches made batches of mediumgrain, long-grain, and brown rice that looked and tasted exactly the same.

This rice cooker comes with a pretty standard <u>one-year</u> limited warranty (PDF).

Flaws but not dealbreakers

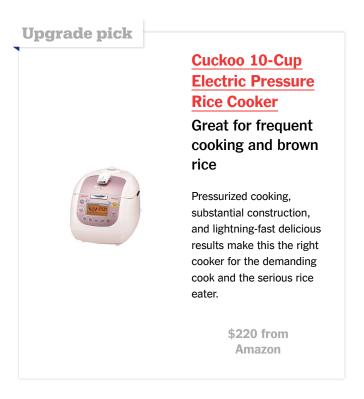
If you plan on making brown rice or long-grain rice often, you may be disappointed in the taste. These two common rice varieties were just okay in both flavor and texture in this machine. If these rices are frequently on your menu, you will likely be better served by the <u>Cuckoo</u> or the <u>Zojirushi</u>. And if your taste in rice requires high-end functionality, such as settings for firmer or softer rice, GABA rice, rice porridge, or rice with a fine sheet of crust along the bottom, this machine won't deliver any of it.

While the quality of the machine is good for its price point, it still contains many plastic parts and a thinner metal interior pot than the higher-end Tiger, Zojirushi, and Cuckoo machines we looked at. The hinge to seal the lid requires a fairly sturdy push to click closed. But overall, the machine isn't hard to use and the bargain price more than makes up for any minor inconveniences.

While not dealbreakers, some physical aspects of the exterior machine lid are less than optimal. For example, the lid opens up from the left side to the right, rather than lifting from front to back like all of the other machines we tested. It feels unwieldy and, if you're serving with your right hand, it comes a little too close for comfort to the scalding-hot interior lid of the machine. All of that said, it's simple enough to just rotate the machine for serving.

Additionally, the condensation collector isn't always doing its job. Lift the lid after cooking and a good amount of hot the pot; sometimes it drips onto the counter. Again, simply rotating the machine and lifting the lid from front to back seems to solve this problem easily.

Also great for frequent cooking and brown rice



For those seeking a great machine beyond the basics, we highly recommend the <u>Cuckoo CRP-G1015F 10-cup</u> <u>Electric Pressure Rice Cooker</u>. Although it's fairly expensive, in our testing we found this made some of the most delicious rice we've ever made at home: flavorful, aromatic, and with a texture that preserves the integrity of every grain. What really sets this cooker apart is how fast it cooks a variety of rices. Short-grain or mediumgrain white rice cooked wickedly fast—just 29 minutes, which is faster than the quick cook setting on any of the other machines that we tested. Brown rice cooks almost twice as fast as in the Zojirushi (our former pick for frequent cooking), and almost a half-hour faster than the Tiger.



The <u>Cuckoo CRP-G1015F 10-cup Electric Pressure Rice Cooker</u>. Photo: Michael Hession

The Cuckoo's pressure cooking technology is key. Like pasta, rice cooks from the outside in. Poorly-cooked rice will get mushy on the outside before each grain is cooked all the way through. The intense pressure that builds from trapped steam inside a pressure cooker pot forces the water's boiling point to rise, causing the rice to cook faster. The result is perfectly cooked rice all the way through.

Of course, it's not without its flaws and drawbacks. While the Nishiki and the brown rice were outstanding, the long-grain white rice was somewhat mushy. Also, the pink color of the machine might not be appealing to everyone. If you can't stand the idea of a pink appliance on your countertop, the company recommends the CRP-HN1059F, which looks more like a motorcycle helmet than a rice cooker. It adds Induction Heating (IH) to its pressure cooking, ostensibly for more even heating, along with a detachable inner lid, and all at a much steeper price. Like the CRP-G1015F, it also has Korean voice navigation—presumably helpful if you speak Korean; entertaining if you don't. But if you find the voice and its little songs annoying, it can be turned off on both machines.

This particular model, one of their best sellers since 2008, is one of the few to offer pressure cooking technology at this price.

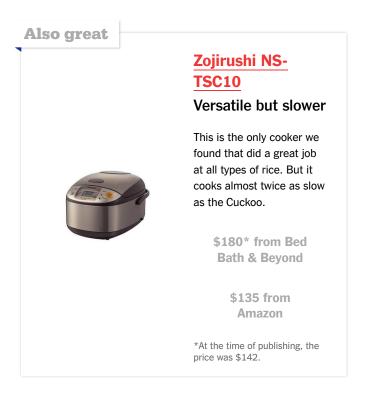
Readers of our original 2013 review recommended this Korean brand; it's easy to overlook it, as it doesn't have a lot of distribution beyond its <u>US website</u> and a third-party Amazon vendor. However, upon further digging, the brand

cooking machines. This particular model, one of their best sellers since 2008, is one of the few to offer pressure cooking technology at this price. (See how this Cuckoo compares with the others in our <u>competition section</u>.)

Many other models hover around \$400, making this a great value in its class.

Cuckoo's warranty policy is less clear than those from Hamilton Beach and Zojirushi. Cuckoo machines don't come with a formal warranty; rather machines are subject to <u>local retailers' warranty policies</u> and you can make a warranty claim on the company's site. We called the company's NYC service center (there's also one in LA), and a rep told us machines are covered for one year from date of purchase. The service rep was helpful and easy to reach.

Runner-up for frequent cooking



If the Cuckoo is too expensive for you but you'd like a sturdier and more versatile cooker than the Hamilton Beach, the **Zojirushi NS-TSC10**, our upgrade pick from the 2013 review, is still a great buy.

The rice it makes is delicious, and the machine is easy to use and easy to clean. The big downside is speed: it was the slowest of the lot when it came to cooking white rice,

34 minutes for the Hamilton Beach and 29 minutes for the Cuckoo. And it was the slowest for brown rice by a landslide, taking an hour and 52 minutes, almost twice as long as the Hamilton Beach and the Cuckoo.



The Zojirushi NS-TSC10. Photo: Michael Hession

In our 2013 taste test, the restaurant professionals liked the Zojirushi best when it came to white rice, and the home cooks all thought that a high-end rice cooker did a much better job than a cheap one when it came to brown. The Zojirushi also did an excellent job with sticky rice and rice porridge.

This was also the only machine that made Japanese rice, brown rice, and long-grain rice taste great. The Cuckoo, by comparison, didn't do a great job with the long-grain white rice. The Zojirushi did not perform so well with the quick cook rice (it wasn't nearly as good as the Hamilton Beach or the Cuckoo). The Zojirushi also comes with a one-year limited warranty, a policy that's a bit clearer than what comes with the Cuckoo.

Care and maintenance

Rice cookers are pretty straightforward. Before use, wash the inner pot, the inner lid (if it's detachable; on our Cuckoo pick it is not), the rice paddle, and the measuring cup. (If you lose the measuring cup that comes with your cooker, simply measure out $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of dry rice for every "cup" of rice you wish to cook.) Read the manufacturer's instructions on these products to determine if they're dishwasher-safe. Thanks to the non-stick nature of the device, cleanup is a snap with hot, soapy water.

Most machines also have a steam catcher that needs to be emptied after every batch of rice. These little cups will get Zojirushi and the Cuckoo have the steam collector on the top of the device. The Hamilton Beach has it along the side at the hinge. Make sure that all product parts are dry before placing them back into the machine. The machine exterior can simply be wiped down as needed.

It's important not to use metal utensils or anything that can scratch the nonstick coating inside the pot.

All of the rice cookers we looked at come with a plastic rice paddle; our favorites were the nubbly paddles that came with the Zojirushi and the Tiger because rice doesn't stick to them. You don't have to use these paddles—a wooden spoon would work as well—but it's important not to use metal utensils or anything that can scratch the nonstick coating inside the pot.

How to prepare Japanese rice for cooking



From left to right: dry, rinsed, and washed rice. Photo: Tim Barribeau

The preparation of Japanese rice is a cause for nearly as much debate as which rice cooker to use. The particulars of how you prepare rice have become a significant part of Japanese food culture. If you're interested in just what it takes, we recommend <u>these two</u> excellent articles by Harris Salat.

In Japan, chefs go through years of training before being allowed to fully prepare the rice at sushi restaurants, and a true itamae (head chef) is said to be able to prepare a

direction.

Chef Takahiro Hori of San Francisco's Ken Ken Ramen restaurant (known for ramen but also bento boxes at lunch) showed us how they prepare the rice for their bento boxes and curries. He explained that properly washing rice is one of the most important things you can do to improve the flavor and texture of Japanese-style white rice, and that involves rinsing it a number of times, washing it gently using either the edge of your hand or your fingertips dozens of times, rinsing it again, and then letting it soak before cooking. Chef Saipin was also clear on the point that the water should be room temperature or very slightly cool, so that the rice doesn't start to slightly cook while it waits.

Most home cooks aren't particularly dead-set on cooking rice to that level of precision. For our most recent tests we rinsed the Japanese rice under running water for one minute, drained it for a minute, then cooked it with the amount of water recommended by the rice cooker manufacturer. (We did not rinse the brown or long-grain rice.)

The competition

We tested the Hamilton Beach 37508 2-to-8 cup Rice Cooker against our top pick as an option for smaller households. In our tests, the 37508 made good short-grain brown and long-grain white rice, but the rice was not as fluffy as our top pick's. And this small cooker couldn't yield good sushi rice. After three attempts using three different ratios, we got everything from undercooked to soggy and overblown. As for size, the smaller Hamilton Beach measures $10\frac{1}{2}$ " tall and 8" diameter, compared with our top pick at 10" tall and 9" diameter. The meager 6-square-inch size difference isn't worth its shortcomings as a rice cooker, even for small homes.

Our favorite pressure cooker, the Instant Pot, is a combination slow cooker, yogurt maker, and rice cooker (among other things). Although it's an excellent pressure cooker, it doesn't make for as great a rice cooker as our top picks. If you want perfect rice, this model is not for you. But if you want to save space by combining a bunch of functions into one device and don't mind compromising a little on rice quality, the Instant Pot might be something to consider.

<u>Cooker and Steamer, 20-cup (Cooked) Silver (37536)</u>, has been discontinued. We found it produced great Japanese-style white rice with good texture and flavor. We think our new Hamilton Beach pick performs just as well.

The <u>Hamilton Beach 37541 4-to-20-cup Digital Simplicity</u>
Rice Cooker and Steamer is the larger version of our new pick, the <u>Hamilton Beach 37549 2-to-14-cup Digital</u>
Simplicity Rice Cooker and Steamer. Although it made good white rice in our tests, its 20-cup capacity seemed a bit too much for most households.

The Tiger JAX-T10U was one of the strongest performers in our latest round of tests. It has a nice thick inner pot $(1\frac{1}{2} \text{ mm for } 5\frac{1}{2} \text{ cups})$, 10 computerized cooking menus, two preset cooking timers, a stainless steel exterior, detachable steam cup, and a detachable inner lid. It is onpar with the winning Zojirushi when making Japanese rice, which is why it moved forward into the latter rounds of testing. But we were not impressed with its brown, long-grain, or quick rice.

The Tiger JAH-T10U we tested for our 2013 review is another high-end rice cooker that's competitive with the high-end Zojirushi or the Cuckoo, but it was marred by some flaws in design performance. It produced very good rice; it was quicker to cook brown rice than the Zojirushi and it had an even better cooking pot. But the restaurant professionals didn't like the white rice as much; it was much trickier to take apart/reassemble for cooking; when it's done cooking your rice, the noise it makes is so quiet that it's extremely easy to miss; the lid gets hotter than most of the other models; and it tends to have a ring of stuck rice in the pot if you don't turn it out right.

The Panasonic SR-DE103 was the most affordable of the high-end machines in our 2013 testing, but the pros really disliked the rice from it, universally ranking it low, especially for clumping and taste. It's also extremely slow to cook brown rice, could hold less of the stuff than the competition, had a problem with scorching brown rice, did a very poor job with sticky rice, and its bowl is harder to read and use than the other high-end models'. That said, the home cooks really liked its white rice, and it's very quick to cook white rice. It's a possible alternative if you want to spend less than \$100, but there's not enough to recommend it over a really good high-end model.

another super-affordable rice cooker with a low price tag, a tiny footprint, and a 4-cup maximum capacity. Unfortunately, its rice wasn't really up to scratch, with home cooks rating it bottom of the barrel for both white and brown rice and the pros likewise disliking it (barring one ex-sushi chef who was a fan). It also has a tendency to gather condensation on top of the lid, and while it was very quick to cook both brown and white rice, its brown rice was really poor.

The Zojirushi Induction Heating System Rice Cooker & Warmer NP-HCC18 was a new model since we'd done our original testing, and it has an added setting for jasmine rice and an easier-to-read display. We really wanted to taste rice that had been cooked with IH to see if the technology was worth the cost. Though the rice from the NP-HCC18 was very good, we felt that the rice from our runner-up pick (the lower-end NS-TSC10) was even better. And at almost half the price, we quickly decided to hold on to our original.

The Tiger JKT-S10U, another IH cooker, was in a similar boat. Sure, it made a good batch of Japanese white rice, but not enough to garner double the price tag of the other Tiger model we tested. In this case and with the Zojirushi's, we preferred the rice from the lower-tech machines.

The <u>3 Squares 3RC-3010S TIM3 MACHIN3 20-cup</u> (Cooked) Rice Cooker and Multi Cooker is a relative newcomer, and we loved its capabilities, its design, and its look. What we were not so enamored of, however, was its rice, which was devoid of aroma and great flavor. Note: The Consumer Product Safety Commission recently issued a recall of this product for causing shocks when turned on.

Tatung is another brand, along with the Cuckoo, that was recommended by our readers from the original 2013 rice cooker review. We wanted to give the Taiwanese maker a whirl, so we ordered the TAC-11QN 11-cup Multi-Functional Stainless Steel Rice Cooker, which appeared sturdy, capable, and well-reviewed. The double-boiler pot was unique, but ultimately the cooker was loud and splattery, and the rice stuck to the bottom—an unforgivable act for a rice cooker.

As much as we wanted to love the <u>VitaClav</u> for its adherence to using a traditional clay pot for cooking rice,

rice stuck to the seasoned clay, and the nub of the scalding hot interior lid was difficult to grasp.

The rest:

We looked at a number of Cuckoo models with pressure cooking technology, but found that our pick, the <u>CRP-G1015F 10-cup Electric Pressure Rice Cooker</u>, offered the best combination of price and higher ratings. Here's a comparison chart of our main pick against Cuckoo's other cookers:

				English voice
Model	Price	Color	Cups	nav?
CRP-FA0610F	199.99	White/grey	6	N
CRP-L1010F	259.99	lvory	10	N
CRP-M1059F	249.99	White/red	10	N
CRP-G1015F	219.99	White/pink	10	N
<u>CRP-N0681F</u>	249.99	White/red	6	Υ
CRP-P1009S	279.99	White/silver, black	10	Υ

<u>Cuckoo CR-0631F</u> – A basic model without pressure cooking, this model didn't look quite as promising as some of the other basic models we opted to test. It also was out of stock when we were doing our research.

<u>Tatung TAC-6G-SF 6 Cups Indirect Heating Rice Cooker</u> – Although this comes with decent reviews, we opted to test the larger version of this cooker instead.

Aroma Professional 12-cup (Cooked) Digital Egg-Shape
Rice Cooker, Food Steamer and Slow Cooker – This looked
promising, but but in our 2013 taste test the brand did not
fare well with any of the chef or lay testers. We opted to
skip testing.

Aroma Professional 20-Cup Digital Rice Cooker, Food

Steamer & Slow Cooker - Another well-priced and
positively reviewed model, but as above, we opted not to
test based on our experience with the brand in our 2013
tests.

but for the price and performance, we didn't think it looked better than the two Zojirushi machines we opted to test this round.

We were also taken with the design of the <u>Oster</u> models, but not enough to call them in. Most had glass lids, limited functionality, and fairly poor reviews. The same is true of the <u>Black+Decker</u> models, most of which were quite basic.

We also passed on other <u>Panasonic</u> models. As mentioned, in our 2013 testing the <u>Panasonic SR-DE103 5-cup "Fuzzy Logic" Rice Cooker</u> produced clumped, tasteless rice, and brown rice that stuck to the bottom of the pot. They have replaced their MGS102, MS183, and MS103 models with the 5-cup <u>SR-DF101</u> and the identical 10-cup <u>SR-DF181</u>, but the feature list and product reviews weren't compelling enough to call them in.

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Hannibal Smith • a month ago

Three times now, I've cooked white parboiled rice in the HB 37548.7 cups (way too much for the pot) using the fill line, 1 cup and 1 cup at 2:1 ratio of water to rice. And every single time the bottom is brown and crusty, whether its getting to it after several hours, 10-15 minutes or immediately after it is done cooking. Is this a sign of a defect or is the HB incapable of cooking parboiled white rice? I've been using the non-quick white rice setting.

∧ V • Reply • Share •



JohnnySocko • 2 months ago

This is the fourth time that Wirecutter's top pick of a random item has mirrored a choice I made based on my own research. This is strangely gratifying.:)

Anyway, we've had the Hamilton Beach rice cooker for over a year. My Filipino wife and in-laws give it the thumbs-up...although truth be told, they were also able to make excellent rice (primarily Jasmine) using our tiny old no-name rice cooker that we had picked up in a Chinatown convenience store ages ago. So, I dispute the assertion (made by other commenters) that Asians necessarily have some different litmus test for rice cookers.

Bottom line, the HB cooks our rice well, and has had no quality issues. Therefore, we like it.



Eugene • 2 months ago

Cooking short grain rice in the Korean or Japanese style is pretty easy. Just put in however many cups of rice you want in the removable inner pot, add water from the sink while swishing it around with your fingers, and drain the water by pouring it out without letting any rice out. Do this two or three times depending on preference, with the last time leaving enough water to cook. Wipe the exterior of the pot, set the pot in the cooker, and cook accordingly. Not sure about taste, but mainly because any kind of bulk grain needs a good wash. If you have longer cooking brown or multi-grain rice, it's usually better to let it sit in the water and pre-soak before cooking. Almost every place I've been to that serves brown rice doesn't do this, and so the rice is always under-cooked in my opinion and harder to digest.



Eugene • 2 months ago

A couple things about the Cuckoo since we have a very similar model, you definitely will have some longevity issues. The pressure sensor in the lid is wired through the hinge and there is no slack so the wire is bent every time you open or close the lid. Anybody who's bent a wire repeatedly will know what happens next. Also, it's super hard to clean, with the recommended solution being to send it in for service if it starts to smell. Here's a picture of the wire after I disassembled my rice cooker: https://imgur.com/a/7c6Fe. I rewired it to add

most popular Korean brand, but they we been putting out pretty crappy products lately.

∧ V • Reply • Share •



RC • 2 months ago

I have the old HB model from a few years ago and it has fried its circuits because it is not well insulated and they board gets too hot. I am debating buying another one that will last 2 years or upgrading as I don't like disposable appliances. Any thoughts?

∧ V • Reply • Share •



Young Woman • 2 months ago

I am unfamiliar with the Mahatma long grain white rice. Should I expect its results to apply to Jasmine rice, or is it a very long grain like Basmati rice?

∧ V • Reply • Share •



Young Woman • 2 months ago

How would your Hamilton Beach pick compare to a traditional, simple, one-button rice cooler such as Zojirushi NHS-o6 3-Cup (Uncooked) Rice Cooker? Specifically, in terms of the quality of medium or short grain white rice, and in terms of cooking time?



disqus_Jstu0tVmuA • 5 months ago

You cannot buy the 37529, only the 37549. Your link goes to the 37549. Either you have a typo or your recommended cooker is not available.

2 ^ V · Reply · Share ·



lanC → disqus_Jstu0tVmuA · 5 months ago

LOL! Makes one suspicious, doesn't it? The whole article is biased towards this cheap rice cooker. Believe me, I've said it before in my comments on here on this, just go for the best: Zojirushi or Panasonic (even maybe Cuckoo, but I don't have personal experience with them).

∧ V · Reply · Share ·



Scott Lewis → lanC · 2 months ago

I've had their top pick since 2014 or so (maybe late 2013). I have made rice in it, and also sometimes use my InstantPot when I'm super pressed for time. There's no question you're right. Even though I haven't tried a high end rice cooker, I trust that they are far superior. Just for the dishes we make, the frequency or lack thereof we eat rice, and the type of rice we cook, there's no way I care enough not to just keep using my cheap rice cooker.

But to your point, there is a market, and I guess that's why they recommend higher end devices as well, including a Zojirushi.

2 ^ V · Reply · Share ›



Alexander • 6 months ago

I bought the Hamilton Beach based on this review, and I want to point out that the instructions for long-grained white rice do *not* work with basmati.

Cooking one water of unit per cup of basmati rice results in mushy, inedible rice. Compare this to the cheapest Oster rice cooker (\$18) on Amazon, which does it perfectly with the same amount of water.

I bet I could experiment and find a ratio that works, but it's going to take time. Nobody on the Internet seems to have figured out a solution.

1 ^ V · Reply · Share ›



Eugene → Alexander • 2 months ago

Definitely water to rice ratio is vastly different per rice variety

it's based on Korean cooking so short grain, brown, or multigrain rice, not basmati.



Alioth • 6 months ago

After a year of owning the recommended Hamilton Beach model, I have to disrecommend it. My dislike is largely based on how well it interacts with different types of recipes, which is different from what Wirecutter's testing covered.

It's trying too hard to be a rice cooker AND slow cooker, but it doesn't really act like either one, so you end up having to adapt recipes and make guesstimates all the time. I spend more time fighting with it than I do enjoying my food.

Rice cooker recipes usually assume you have the dead-simple kind of rice cooker, with a single switch for "On" and "Keep Warm". You tweak your recipe by adjusting the ingredient-liquid ratio, or by adding more ingredients partway through. The Hamilton Beach has more complex behavior, but its behaviors are obscured behind the three separate Rice buttons, and not explained in the manual. If you want to cook something like quinoa or lentils, googling "lentils in rice cooker" will get you directions that assume the wrong thing about your device.

It fails even harder as a slow cooker. There is no "low" setting at all; you can't really get lower than an active boil. The cook time maxes out at 6 hours, and the UI for setting it is *terrible*. You hold a button to scroll rapidly from 0 to 90 minutes and then 2 to 6 hours. Scrolled past it? Better go around again.

True, if you just want to put in some white rice and hit the "white rice" button, then the Hamilton Beach model works just fine... but if that's all you want, get the dead simple kind of rice cooker instead.

1 ^ V · Reply · Share ·



lanC → Alioth • 6 months ago

Although I haven't experience with this particular rice cooker, I will say that in all my experience, that when you're talking specialist machines (of any ilk), then the premium one ones work well and as they are designed to. However, when you try to make something all-singing-all-dancing and offer other features and functions, it's just a compromise. It doesn't do anything 'well', just 'okay'. 'Jack of all trades, master of none' comes to mind!

I don't think you can beat individual machines designed to do only one thing, but to do it well, very well - when it's a premium product. Any multi-function device, by default, isn't going to excel at any one thing, like a standalone machine will.

But if you're short on space, aren't overly fastidious and particular, and on a budget, then sure you may be happy with a multi-function device. But for the purist, there is no beating a specialist product, from a premium brand, and going for the top model (or one down, if you're talking silly prices for minimal gain in the result). Zojirushi and Panasonic are really first rate, Japanese-quality machines that deliver superb results - but like fine wine, some people can't/don't appreciate such refinement. It's all down to standards, both manufacturing as well as the end user's taste (or not!).

I think you've given a very fair sounding account, and detailing things in a helpful manner.

1 ^ V · Reply · Share ›



Alioth → lanC • 6 months ago

That all makes a lot of sense. I think what really grinds my gears about the HB is that almost all my complaints could be resolved with a few changes to the UI and programming. (Possibly except for the lack of "low" slow-cooker mode because there might be some

up a classic crock-pot at the thrift store is for :)

1 ^ V · Reply · Share ›



IanC → Alioth • 6 months ago

Thanks. To be fair on HB (or any other manufacturer too) is that any changes, however small, do require a lot of work, even for a these minimal changes, as it has to go back to the manufacturer, and then the programmers, followed by changing the designs, instructions (in some cases) and then keeping detailed records so as to distinguish between product versions etc. I'm sure you're aware of this, but having been involved in manufacturing, for arranging my own spec products, it takes a LOT of work, which the public can't see.

However, this is no excuse for poor design and lack lustre testing in the first place, which therefore creates problems further down the road. It's just sloppy really. But there is a lot of 'white labelling' going on too, whereby the

see more

1 ^ V · Reply · Share ›



John O'Grady • 7 months ago

Yeah, the Zoji is pretty slow, but the rice comes out perfect every time. It works great with steel-cut oatmeal too.

1 ^ V · Reply · Share ›



sheew4ei · 8 months ago

Cuckoo has IH type cookers which are a higher end product then what wirecutters recommends (HP) for the upgrade pick. Also worth noting that you can choose between 6 cup and 10 cup options.

"HP stand for Heating Plate. It is very traditional type of heting inner pot (oven) of the cooker. IH type is advanced type as heating method. IH types of cooker have higher heating power than Heating Plate type."

http://www.cuckooworld.com/...

http://www.cuckooworld.com/...

^ V · Reply · Share ›



sheew4ei → sheew4ei • 8 months ago

Found another. Stainless steel. Also see chart at page. https://www.amazon.com/dp/B...



sheew4ei → sheew4ei • 8 months ago

from the comparison chart at the following url, looks like https://www.amazon.com/dp/B... is actually the the top model.



lanC → sheew4ei • 7 months ago

These may be good rice cookers; and many things from south Korea are generally good (with a few exceptions) but the most famous (Rolls Royce of rice cookers) is Zojirushi, and they are Japanese. Virtually everything Japanese is world class. Panasonic overall is perhaps the most prestigious, along with Sony; but in the world of rice cookers, Zojirushi is top, having reigned supreme in the Japanese marketplace and are among their expats overseas too. Their attention to detail when it comes to design and manufacture is exemplary.

As I have said before (below) their top cooker's bowl

which gently alkalises the water too. This machine also measures the water temperature within, prior to starting, and the ambient air temperature too.

.

see more

1 ^ V · Reply · Share ›



poopmast → lanC · 2 months ago

Many of my friends and family have cast iron pot National(Panasonic) or Sharp rice cookers as they simulate kamado gohan better than Zojirushi.



theseanteam → lanC · 6 months ago

I don't know how you can say it is better until you have tried both. Research can only take you so far. Having seen the rice made from high end Zojirushi and Cuckoos side by side, it's no comparison--the Cuckoo makes a better pot of



lanC → theseanteam • 6 months ago

It sounds to me like you have some sort of unfounded bias, and just an opinion. Merely 'seeing' rice doesn't qualify you to take a stand either, if, as you say, you need to try both. Trying would therefore include consuming, but you've only 'seen' as a comparison. It doesn't instil much confidence in your assertions I'm afraid!

Anyone who says 'no comparison', when talking such high end rice cookers, really is stretching believability, for the differences will be small, however you look at it.

So in your short reply you have shown 2 rather gaping errors on your part, and lost credibility, sorry to say.

You've still to consider how 'fresh' the rice cookers keep the rice too. There is no indication as to how these Cuckoo ones perform there either, when the IH, pressurised Zojirushi ones DO work very well in this regard. Anyone who has tried one will attest to this.

How anyone can recommend as best, a rice cooker using a HP instead of IH is a mystery. We've had both types and can hands down vouch for the latter, which spreads the heat across the whole bowl, NOT just that of the heating plate!

I stand my my less biased, real life experiences. $\land \ \ \lor \ \cdot \$ Reply $\cdot \ \$ Share $\cdot \ \$



Gemma Seymour • 8 months ago

As an Asian-American of a certain age, I have been using electric rice cookers since the 1970s, well before they were generally available in the West, because our travelling family members would bring such oddities to the US for us when they would visit. My family has always sworn by the simple one-button type Panasonic, Zojirushi, or Tiger brands. Any time we have tried an off brand, it has been a mistake.

Asian people, by and large, do not eat brown rice, unless they are strict Buddhists who need the extra nutrition. We don't need to keep rice hot all day, because we make it fresh for almost every meal, and it gets eaten right away. We also do not tend to stock 18 different

dependent) and pernaps one or two otners for special purposes (sticky rice desserts, for instance).

I don't want any kind of "keep warm" feature. I want to hit the button and walk away from it. I don't want to have to remember to unplug the rice cooker or shut it off after dinner.

see more

3 ^ V · Reply · Share ›



Jae Lee • 8 months ago

have you tested how long these machines can keep rice fresh? I have owned cuckoo models before and they can keep them for 48 hours without problem. i wonder if HB can do that also.



IanC → Jae Lee • 8 months ago

'How long?' It depends on your interpretation of what 'fresh' is, and moreover how 'good' it was in the first place. The absolute best machines (only Japanese I'm afraid, and made IN Japan) are Zojirushi (and Panasonic a close second).

The top ones in the range are IH (Induction Heated), so no heating element as such as the bowl itself 'induces' the heat, and ONLY where it touches the rice and water inside. They also have an automatic 'pressure' function, which kicks in for certain rice types. The higher temperature levels reached enable to starch to escape to the outer surface of the rice grains, which makes them softer, fluffier and more nutritious as it becomes easier to digest too. This ALSO enables the rice to stay fresher for longer (though no time specified as each person to their own). But rice will stay fresher for LONGER than any other type of rice cooker. Science is behind it.

Furthermore, the top Zojirushi model also has platinum

see more

1 ^ V · Reply · Share ›



91bhjy • 9 months ago

Might want to update the link to your pick, the Hamilton Beach 37508. It says 1-2 *month* shipping time. (As of May 20, 2017).



bones boy • 10 months ago

I absolutely SWEAR by my Zojirushi NP-HTC10 induction heat/pressure cooker. It makes perfect rice no matter the type. I can steam with it and make soups too. It's perfect.

2 ^ V · Reply · Share ·



lanC → bones boy • 9 months ago

You are right to do so! So few people in the west appreciate properly cooked rice, with superior taste, texture and nutrient availability. Long cooking times are necessary to achieve this, but typically, some testers mark things down for this, putting speed ahead of quality. If you plan adequately then time is NOT an issue at all - but lack of planning is!

It's a little like being a whiskey connoisseur. It takes a more refined taste pallet to appreciate a better whiskey - and don't forget the best whiskeys are only the best because they too have taken a long time to mature. Rome wasn't built in a day, as they say. MOST of the comparison between rice cookers I've seen have been very poor, this one included, sorry to say.

You obviously enjoy and appreciate really decent rice, cooked properly, and with pressure, the rice is cooked more properly too, as the starch is converted and extracted to the outside of the grains, making the texture light, fluffy, lasting longer before it deteriorates and above all, easier to digest. This basic rice cooker comparison totally ignores any of this - though to

mutchon and pressure cooking. However they OCGFT to be mentioned and compared, as you can't otherwise make bold claims as to what the 'best' rice cookers are otherwise. The best at what anyway? Speed in this case obviously; and so quality is given a back seat. So glad a few of us aren't taken in with this type of shallow testing and evaluation.

1 ^ V · Reply · Share ›



Ritchie Buenviaje • 10 months ago

So, I don't disagree that the Tatung is loud and sputtery, but there's a trick to preventing the rice from getting stuck at the bottom; wait an additional 15-20 minutes after the cooking cycle is finished.

Another thing about the Tatung is that it is super-easy to maintain and fix.

∧ V • Reply • Share •



Asdrubale • 10 months ago

I do not think the original recipe is so ... I tried but the taste was very harsh and the rice was overcooked.

After a few recipes, here's the real story ... I've found a great machine to do it all automatically! https://www.geekwrapped.com...



Adi • 10 months ago

Good details..Thank you!!

∧ V · Reply · Share ·



Ceci · a year ago

Did you test any of the Zojirushi models with pressure cooking functionality (for example, upon quick amazon search, the NP-NVC10 https://www.amazon.com/Zoji...

1 ^ V · Reply · Share ·



Pok Pok • a year ago

Sorry. You are totally wrong. I bought the hamilton Beach and I had to return it. Not a rice cooker at all. Terrible result!!!!! I am Thai. I know about rice, I eat rice for 45 years. So mad about you Karen!

1 ^ V · Reply · Share ·



Erin Price Community → Pok Pok • a year ago

Sorry to hear that the Hamilton Beach didn't work out for you. If you'd like to share any details about why you were dissatisfied with it, I will definitely pass them on to our reviewer.

1 ^ V · Reply · Share ›



Electric griddle · a year ago

these are some best cookware to use.



mchan · a year ago

I think that the love for the N2-ZCC10/18 is driven mainly by the fact that it is the cheapest of Zojirushi's models at that capacity that is made in Japan rather than China. I don't know if that makes much of a difference, but who knows.

∧ V • Reply • Share •



Nancy Scharding • a year ago

Anybody know which rice cooker Morimoto uses in his new book on Japanese cooking (see partial photos in book.)

∧ V • Reply • Share •



John ∘ a year ago

Do you have any experience with lower capacity Cuckoo models? I was looking at the CR-0655F (https://www.cuckoomallusa.c... and am wondering if the performance would be comparable. Thank you.

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