

test drive

# Grilling Baskets

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Every cook who's ever driven herself crazy dashing between the grill and the stove has wondered, What does it take to cook an entire meal outside?

It takes the right tool, and a grill basket or wok can go a long way toward bringing smaller or delicate foods out of the kitchen and onto the grill, without the worry of small pieces falling through the grate. To be worthwhile, a basket or wok must tame the flame, let in the smoky flavor, and make it easy to toss or stir items to keep them from overcooking.

The grill basket category can be confusing, because similar-looking items are called baskets, or woks, or grill skillets. We focused on perforated pans with raised sides and open tops that allow you to shake or flip cut-up vegetables, pieces of meat, or shrimp—food you might otherwise skewer.

We tested a range of shallow-sided perforated pans in round, square, and rectangular versions, some with long handles like a skillet's. Materials included stainless steel, porcelain-enamelled nonstick surfacing, other nonstick coatings, and cast iron.

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## What to look for

- ◆ Grill baskets need to stand up to high, direct temperatures; look for sturdy construction and hefty weight.
- ◆ If easy cleanup is a priority, nonstick finishes surpass stainless, which takes real scrubbing to keep clean (although most stainless can go in the dishwasher).
- ◆ Porcelain enamel tends to be tougher than other nonstick coatings. Although we couldn't test longevity, we did eliminate any nonstick baskets that showed undue flaking or chipping.
- ◆ Holes shouldn't be so big that slices of onions or other slim veggies fall through, and they need to be well formed and smooth so jagged edges or slits don't trap food.
- ◆ Sides should be high enough to accommodate abundant vegetables and permit shaking as well as stirring.

## Grilling Baskets: top picks



### Outset copper-color nonstick grill wok

\$25, [ChefTools.com](http://ChefTools.com)

The perforated rounded sides on this wok allow heat to circulate evenly and make it easy to stir or toss vegetables and shrimp. The wok, which despite appearances is not made of copper but steel sprayed with a copper-colored porcelain-enamel nonstick coating, heats a little slowly. But the mellower heat means you don't need to constantly stir vegetables, and the pan was slow to overcook even shrimp. The surface area of the bottom is smaller than that of the square woks, an issue if you want to grill fish fillets. The looped metal handles stayed cooler than those on the other woks and allow for hanging storage.



### Mr. Bar-B-Q's Platinum Prestige Premium stainless-steel grilling wok

\$16, [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com)

The heavy steel and solid construction of this 12-inch-square wok made it our favorite among the stainless versions. The rolled handles made transporting it, especially with oven mitts, a bit awkward, but they took up less room on the grill. The thick body delivered a predictable heat, which means better-controlled cooking for vegetables and shrimp. But the stainless material proved less forgiving than nonstick-coated woks, especially when used over high heat. The tradeoff for the durability of stainless is that you can't close the grill and walk away, or you'll get veggies charred on the outside and raw inside.