
GRILL GUIDE '22

HOT TAKE

**OUR GRILL BOSS, DAVID ZIMMER, DOESN'T
BLOW SMOKE ABOUT BARBECUES.**

**READ HIS ADVICE BEFORE YOU BUY
YOUR NEXT OUTDOOR COOKER**



WHY IS IT THAT ARTICLES about buying a new outdoor cooking device must read like motivational jock-talk from an armchair coach? It seems all but pre-ordained that they are full of urgent advice that is both competitive and status-seeking, where readers will “up their grilling game” and “own summer” if they just buy a grill that is bigger and faster and hotter thanks to a patented “Ionizing Plasma Scorch Plate.” Want to be the envy of your neighbours or the best dad ever? Pick up a “Pecos Bill Ranchero XL” and show them this ain’t your first rodeo. Everyone knows this is a bunch of baloney, directed mostly at men because we seem to be highly susceptible to such talk. And everyone also knows that not a single one of their neighbours gives a sweet damn about the kind of grill they own.

So why bother? Wouldn’t it be better to acknowledge that there are many different kinds of cottage cooks, from early adopters who want the latest and greatest to the most reluctant meal providers who are happy to warm up frozen burgers and chicken wieners? At home, I own three grills (see “How Many Grills is Too Many?” opposite), which I feel to be the bare minimum for my sort of activities. But at the cottage, where I’d rather be swimming than prepping porchetta, I have an inherited gas grill that is almost ready for the scrap pile. But it cooks dogs and burgers and chicken and chops just fine, so it serves my particular cottage needs.

Maybe you don’t need a grill at all. In which case, you have saved some money and need not read further. For the rest of us, things get more complicated: with the exception of dedicated smokers (wood, gas, or electric), most outdoor cookers claim to be all things to everyone, the one true grill for direct grilling, slow-smoking, and hot-roasting, even acting as an oven replacement for pizza, bread, and baked beans. The (barbecue) rub is that these declarations are both true and false because while just about any grill can pull off standard cooking operations, certain machines excel at one or two styles. Like Mom would say: “You can’t be good at everything.” The trick is to find the grill or smoker that’s really good at making the food you like best.



Napoleon Prestige 500 RSIB
Four-burner gas grill with rear and side infrared burners
\$1,749

THE UTILITY PLAYER GAS GRILLS

There’s a reason just about everyone owns at least one gas grill. It’s the all-around workhorse for most cottage cooking chores because it’s simple to operate and doesn’t require any special techniques to get good results. Gassers are great at direct-heat cooking for most of our sear-and-flip favourites like steaks, chops, and burgers, and they can also hot-roast with indirect heat provided the cooking surface is big enough to keep the meat away from the flames. Gas grills with dedicated rotisserie burners—where the heat source is beside the food—are easier to use and get better results than models that rely on the grill’s main burners for rotisserie cooking.

Low temperature, indirect cooking (slow-roasting or smoking) is where gas grills stumble because while they do a great job of getting very hot, they aren’t

Vermont Castings Vanguard
Two-burner convertible gas barbecue grill \$850



great at keeping the consistent low temperatures that you need to smoke a brisket. And because smoking is an indirect process, the amount of food you can cook is limited. Gas doesn’t produce delicious smoke, so wood chunks, chips, or pellets must be added and kept smouldering. You can certainly make smoked foods on a gas grill, it just takes careful set-up and temperature control and can deliver inconsistent results.

Many gas grills come plain Jane; others include options like dedicated searing stations, side burners, and rotisserie burners. It’s really up to the buyer. If you aren’t going to use those add-ons, don’t buy them. And consider a grill’s cooking area carefully. If you won’t be using indirect heat to cook a turkey and don’t need to knock out 40 burgers at a time, choose a smaller grill. It will sear steaks and grill sausages just as well as a giant-sized unit. >>

ILLUSTRATION: JARETT SITTER

How many grills is too many?



MAYBE IT’S A DEVIANT brain affliction, but I’ve owned a lot of grills and smokers over the years, at one time topping out at 13 in active service. Overkill, I know, but I started out by fixing up castoffs using new parts. Then I bought some. Then my wife, a butcher, did some work for a now-defunct gas grill company, and we received models for testing. In the interim, I couldn’t resist another grill or two. As a retirement present from this magazine, I was given an enormous plate-steel offset barrel smoker that could swallow a pig. At one time we did some business with a media outfit that paid us with grills instead of real money, which is an exchange I cannot recommend.

But that was then. I’ve now whittled the pack down to the three that suit me best: a gas grill with some aftermarket anodized aluminum searing grates, a charcoal grill with a rotisserie setup, and a fancy-schmancy insulated, stainless-steel pellet cooker that I worship like a jewel-encrusted pagan idol. There’s also one more run-of-the-mill gas grill at our island cottage. So call it four in total, which is just right for me.

I grill stuff with either gas or charcoal, depending on how much of a hurry I’m in. Whole chickens and roasts get spun on the rotisserie over charcoal. My pellet cooker works as a high-temp grill, but I never use it that way. It’s the pizza and bread baker and the smoker that slow-cooks ribs and brisket and pork shoulder, sometimes overnight for 18 hours. You can do all this stuff, sort of, on a single cooker, but not with the same ease or with such consistent results. Plus, sometimes it’s just fun to grill chicken wings over charcoal while there’s a New York-style pizza bubbling in the pellet cooker. Call me crazy.



HOT TIPS

Canadian celebrity chef, Rob Rainford

1. What do you grill on?

"I have several grills, but my Weber kettle is what I'm using the most these days. It's charcoal and the whole process of lighting it, keeping it lit, and making a fire is what I'm into right now. The ease of cooking on propane doesn't pose a challenge for me anymore. I just prefer to make things harder for myself. It's either a one-beer process to light your propane, or a three-beer process to light your charcoal."

2. What's your go-to grilling cookbook?

"That would be *Born to Grill*, which is my own book. My top three favourite recipes in it would be the brisket, the stuffed beef tenderloin with chanterelles, and the tuna and pineapple lollipops. And that last one is wrapped in bacon."

3. What's the first thing you'd make on a new grill?

"I would go with some great burgers. And make them with ground chuck that I did myself. Cook them up for the family."

Rob Rainford's love for backyard cooking, entertaining, and barbecuing is on full display in his TV show License to Grill. His book Born to Grill features 20 menus and more than 100 barbecue recipes.



THE ORIGINAL CHARCOAL GRILLS

Back in the day, before propane and natural gas came to town, charcoal grills ruled the outdoor cooking world. They excel at the kind of high-temperature direct cooking we love for burgers, steaks, and chops, and the flavour you get from fat dripping on hot coals (as opposed to a sheet-metal shield on a gas grill) is undeniably delicious. In my opinion, meat cooked on a rotisserie over live coals should receive UNESCO world heritage status.

Charcoal grills are simple machines that can produce outstandingly flavourful food but do require active, hands-on management from the cook. Because their heat source—lump charcoal or charcoal briquettes—can be moved around, these grills are versatile for both kinds of indirect cooking, hot-roasting, and slow-smoking. The actual indirect cooking capacity of a charcoal grill depends on the size and shape of the cooking chamber because you need enough room to keep the food (say, a big beef

roast) away from the flames. There are also many aftermarket accessories, like rib racks, that let you maximize that indirect grill space.

If you want instant flames at the push of a button, charcoal is not for you. The fuel needs to be lit using a charcoal chimney or the on-board propane-assisted igniters found on some models. For long cooks, more fuel has to be lit and added to the grill at regular intervals. Ashes need to be removed every so often. On a charcoal grill, the difference between white-hot searing temperatures and the 200°F-225°F ideal for slow-smoking comes down to airflow, controlled by vents beneath the fire pit and

on top of the lid. (Charcoal grills without vented lids—which you can buy or build—are essentially uncontrollable open braziers good for high-temp direct cooking and nothing else.) Building and maintaining a fire, and carefully controlling the vents to produce the desired temperatures takes practice, attention, and even enthusiasm. >>



Napoleon 22" Pro Charcoal Kettle Grill with cart \$549

ROB RAINFORD: CHRIS CHETTY / CC EVENT SERVICES INC.

Feed (all of) the people



GIZMO ALERT!

Are these grilling gadgets useful or useless? You decide! Okay, we decided. But you are of course free to form your own opinion.

BY JACKIE DAVIS



1 SLOTDOG Hot dog slicer

Because scoring hot dogs with a knife is no way for a person to live, dammit. This slicer has stainless-steel blades to cut a criss-cross pattern into your dog, allowing condiments to penetrate deeper. Your hot dog will taste more like ketchup and less like whatever is actually inside a hot dog. You don't want to think about that. (homehardware.ca, \$29)

Useful-O-Meter: 5/10



2 Digital cooking thermometer with pager

Tell this gadget what protein you're grilling and the desired doneness, and the thermometer will page you when the food is ready. Or when you're needed in the ER. (leevalley.com, \$60)

Useful-O-Meter: 8/10

ILLUSTRATION: JARETT SITTER

GIVEN THE DIVERSITY of delicious grillables available, it's puzzling how unidimensional outdoor cooking has become in cottage land. Instead of "Love All, Serve All," menu planning has narrowed toward an either/or proposition: steaks or chops. Ribs or salmon. Chicken or chicken.

Enter mixed grill, one of those "new" ideas that has been around since fire was invented and some proto-dudes cooked songbirds and giant tree grubs at the same time. Yes, more food is always better, but mixed grill works because it's a people pleaser: fussy palates will find something they like, and open-minded eaters will be impressed.

Many cultures have put a stamp on mixed grill, from the Brazilians and the Argentinians (heavy on beef and all its parts) to the English, who give special prominence to gently grilled lamb kidneys. There are versions from South Asia (eaten with roti and chutney) to Jerusalem, where it's called *me'orav Yerushalmi* in Hebrew and a 200 kg serving of spiced-up chicken hearts, livers, and spleens, along with some lamb bits, became a Guinness world record.

Anything can be part of a mixed grill. Sausages are the traditional backbone, but all meats and seafood—and skewers of the same—are tasty possibilities. Different cooking times daunt some grillers, but the secret is to resist formality and the urge to serve everything at once, piping hot. Instead, set out lots of salad and bread and wine, and let dinner happen in waves as each "grill" is ready. Or pile everything on a platter when it's done and enjoy dinner at room temperature, which is equally delicious. Relax. Just don't forget to talk and argue and enjoy the sunset.

It does help to get big cuts like chicken quarters or a whole pork tenderloin going first, then focus on short-order stuff—skewers, sausages, fish in foil. If your timing gets muddled, just carry on. People who want to show off could spin Cornish hens on a rotisserie or do back ribs in a smoker while they grill chorizo, marinated flank steak, and cilantro-lime shrimp skewers. But even a basic hibachi can handle bratwurst, chicken wings, lamb satay, and bacon-wrapped scallops. This is the ultimate in free-style cooking, so don't forget to experiment with some grilled polenta or lettuce or bitter greens with olive oil. Got some kielbasa in the fridge? Slice it up and throw it on a hot grate. Because that's how we roll, mixed-grill style.—D.Z.

Originally published in the Summer '16 issue of Cottage Life.



HOT TIPS

Food writer and cookbook author **Amy Rosen**

1. What do you grill on?

I normally use a basic Weber charcoal grill. I love the flavour, searing heat, and extra juiciness it brings, but when we have a lot of people up to the cottage, I use gas—it holds triple the food, is faster, and is no fuss.

2. What's your go-to grilling cookbook?

Whenever I have a barbecuing question, I can always find the answer in the bible: Steve Raichlen's *The Barbecue! Bible*. From cook times to rubs and techniques, he's the master at making the complicated seem doable. Especially when I want to smoke something, like my annual brisket, I always refer to this book.

3. What's the first thing you'd make on a new grill?

Bone-in, skin-on barbecued chicken. Starting with a dry rub and ending with a glaze of barbecue sauce, it's just the most satisfying protein to get exactly right. And everyone loves it.

Amy Rosen is an award-winning freelance journalist. Amy's sixth cookbook, Canada's Best New Cookbook, will be released in fall 2022. She's also the owner of Rosen's Cinnamon Buns. She shared her family's Hanukkah cottage traditions (including delicious recipes) in our Winter 2018 issue.



Big Green Egg
Large BGE
Original kit \$1,999

STEVEN RAICHLEN, ROGER PROULX; AMY ROSEN, ROBERTO CARUSO

THE INSULATOR
KAMADO COOKERS

Kamado cookers (such as Big Green Eggs) are super-efficient charcoal grills made from thick ceramic material or heavily insulated stainless steel and are capable of both very high temperature cooking and the low and slow needed for long smoking sessions. The lids are heavy and form a tight seal when closed. Precise venting allows fine control of airflow, which prevents flare-ups when cooking at high temperatures and lets the cooker run at consistent, low smoking temps. Because they are so heavily insulated and sealed, kamados use less fuel than a conventional charcoal grill, and ardent fans of these units say the tightly sealed cooking chamber retains moisture for more flavourful food.

Kamados tend to be tall and deep, with a small fire pan at the bottom, accessed through a sliding door. Food

is cooked on a grate directly over these coals as per usual. But for both high- and low-temperature indirect cooking, some type of diffuser plate must be added between the meat and the heat to protect the food from the flames. Kamado cookers produce excellent barbecue but limited grill space and a coal bed that can't be moved around does restrict their capacity for big cuts or multiple racks of ribs. The solution? Buy a really big kamado.

Priced anywhere from \$1,200 to \$4,000, depending on brand and size, kamados are more expensive than most charcoal grills and come with a steep learning curve because they require more precise vent control than a conventional cooker. Newbies should expect a few fails—snuffed coals or total incineration—before they get the knack. Think of kamado cooking as a skill to master, requiring close attention, diligence, and a measure of trial and error. >>



Kamado Joe
Big Joe II
24" ceramic \$2,599

GIZMO ALERT!



3 Lil' Pig Pellet Grill

Does anyone's next pellet grill need to be hot pink and shaped like a pig? Um, it does if they want to repurpose it as an obnoxious rural mailbox sometime in the future. (traeger.com, \$1,600)
Useful-O-Meter: 7/10



4 Small briefcase barbecue

Lawyers would be way happier if their briefcases were not filled with briefs and instead were filled with miniature charcoal grills. "You know what this pre-trial motion needs? A burger." (Kikkerland Portable BBQ Suitcase; amazon.ca, \$79)
Useful-O-Meter: 4/10



HOT TIPS

Steven Raichlen, author and TV host

1. What do you grill on?

I have around 50 grills between two homes and my Barbecue University. It's really hard to pick a favourite. But if I could take only one grill to a deserted island, it would probably be a simple Weber kettle grill.

2. What's your go-to grilling cookbook?

The Barbecue! Bible. It was the first book I wrote on barbecuing and grilling, and I travelled around the world to write it. It's sold over a million copies, and it's still in print. Next year will mark its 25th anniversary. As for a favourite recipe, that's like asking my favourite child. I love them all. One of my favourite appetizers from that book is the Vietnamese Basil Beef Rolls.

3. What's the first thing you'd make on a new grill?

On a smoker, I'd make my Big Bad Beef Ribs from my book *Project Smoke*. If you're talking about a grill, my Caveman T-bones from my book *Project Fire*.

Steven Raichlen has written 32 books including the international blockbusters The Barbecue! Bible and How to Grill and the New York Times bestselling Planet Barbecue and Project Smoke. His latest book, How to Grill Vegetables, focusses on global plant-based grilling.



HOT TIPS

Tawfik Shehata, chef and cooking school founder

1. What do you grill on?

I use a Weber Performer Charcoal Grill*. There is nothing you can't do on it: grill, smoke, rotisserie—it even has a ring for a wok! Mine is almost 15 years old and is on its last legs—I entertain a lot. I've had a new one in the box for a year, but I refuse to part with my current one. It taught me everything I know about cooking over a live fire.

2. What's your go-to grilling cookbook?

Gastro Grilling, written by The Godfather of the Grill, Ted Reader. My family's favourite recipe is Slash and Grill Chicken Drums. They're finished with a sweet barbecue sauce and crushed barbecue chips—seriously!

3. What's the first thing you'd make on a new grill?

I lived in Jamaica for a few years, so nothing says summer more than the smell of a charcoal fire, jerk chicken, and reggae. But I am from the Middle East, so a whole grilled fish like branzino is one of my favourite things in the world. For entertaining, I would smoke chicken wings and serve them with my killer black peppercorn sauce.

Tawfik Shehata is the Executive Chef at The International Centre in Mississauga, Ont. He runs Julia's Child, a virtual cooking school for families.



Weber Smokey Mountain Cooker Smoker 18" \$539

THE BARBECUE SPECIALIST

DEDICATED SMOKERS

Call them one-trick ponies or purpose-built low-and-slow barbecue specialists, dedicated smokers do one thing and they do it well. If smoking is your thing and you're tired of coaxing along a regular gas or charcoal grill over long cooks, there are three kinds of dedicated smoker to consider.

Charcoal water smokers: a.k.a. "bullet" smokers. Time-tested performers, these

smokers look like modular missile silos. Food sits on racks at the top of the smoker, suspended over a water pan. Beneath the water pan is a fire pan that

makes the heat. Wood chunks placed on the hot coals make the smoke. The water pan keeps drippings from the meat up top from falling on the hot coals, helps to mitigate temperature swings, and adds humidity to the cooking chamber. Using air vents for temperature adjustment, a water smoker with a full load of charcoal or briquettes can



Broil King Smoke Cabinet Gas \$849 (Propane); \$919 (Natural Gas)

TAWFIK SHEHATA, CHRISTINE HOLLOWAY

maintain low barbecue temperatures for eight to 12 hours. To add additional fuel or wood chunks, better models have a sliding door to access the charcoal and water pans. Cheaper models make you take the smoker apart to get to the bottom section.

Gas smokers: usually housed in a rectangular cabinet, the units share the vertical arrangement of a charcoal smoker, with the fire pan replaced by a propane burner. A pan for wood-smoking chips sits above the burner and does double duty as a heat shield to keep the flames off the food on the horizontal racks above. Some models have water pans while others do not. Most have some sort of catchment for drippings. With no charcoal to light and maintain, these smokers are simple to run but not fully autonomous: to keep making smoke, you'll need to add wood chips throughout the cooking process.

Electric smokers: these cabinet-style units create heat and smoke with a simple electric element set beneath horizontal food racks. Basic models cost \$250 to \$400 and have simple "high, low, off" controls while more sophisticated units are thermostatically controlled. Spend \$500 to \$800 and you get more features, like a fan to circulate heat, an insulated cabinet, water and drip pans, and the ability to add wood chips without opening the cooking chamber. Some models, with a system that feeds wood chip "pucks" into the combustion pan, are fully autonomous and can complete long cooks without attention. Electric smokers are inexpensive and simple to use. Because they produce smoke without actual flame combustion, some critics feel they impart an inferior flavour to smoked meats. Uninsulated units may struggle to keep up proper cooking temperatures in winter weather. >>

GIZMO ALERT!



5 BBQ branding iron for personalized grilling

With the entire alphabet at your disposal, you can brand your meat with all kinds of messages: "Happy Birthday" on a rib-eye; "Where's the beef?" on a pork chop; "Sorry that I overcooked this" on anything that you touch. (*amazon.ca*, \$29) **Useful-O-Meter: 3/10**



HOT TIPS

Julie Van Rosendaal, food journalist and cookbook author

1. What do you grill on?

I have a small Vermont Castings gas grill, though I love cooking over an open fire the best. And my next door neighbour, who is also a good friend and a catering chef, has a pizza oven that I sometimes get to use. When he fires it up, I always mix up some bagel dough to toss in while the fire's burning.

2. What's your go-to grilling cookbook?

I'm a big fan of Ron Shewchuk—his *Barbecue Secrets* cookbook is one I refer to often. I've learned a lot of skills from him—he taught me how to plank a brie—and the book has some fantastic sauce recipes in it.

3. What's the first thing you'd make on a new grill?

Ooh...if I got a new outdoor cooker, I'd grill some flatbreads or perhaps pizza—one of my favourite things to make on the grill.

Julie Van Rosendaal is the Calgary-based author of 12 best-selling cookbooks. She has been the food columnist for the Calgary Eyeopener on CBC Radio One for more than 16 years. Julie teaches, speaks, and cooks at culinary schools and events across the country. You can find her recipes, articles, and podcast on her website, dinnerwithjulie.com.



Dyna-Glo 30" Analog Electric Smoker \$267

*Though it might seem like it, Weber does not have a secret mole on the CL staff. Really.

Cooking trends, through the ages

THE PAST:

Old school Promethean cool

As any tent-dweller knows, you don't need store-bought contrivance to cook a burger. A carefully managed campfire, burned down to hot coals, can do a fine job of direct-heat grilling. You just need to add a cooking grate, propped up on a few rocks or small logs. Too lazy to build a campfire? Dig a pit and dump in a bag of charcoal briquettes. Once they're lit, with a light covering of grey ash, add that cooking grate and some steaks. Need a bigger cooker? Is squatting by a campfire hard on your knees? Consider creating a one-wheeled grill using a steel wheelbarrow. Just build a fire in the bottom with wood or charcoal, rig a cooking grate across the top and you've got a mobile MacGyver grill.



Masterbuilt Gravity Series 560 Digital Charcoal Grill and Smoker \$500

THE PRESENT:

Can you feel the pull of gravity?

Originally developed on the pro-barbecue circuit, gravity cookers were made for low-and-slow smoking. But civilian models are now available that can do high-temperature grilling as well. A horse of another colour, gravity grills are charcoal burners with a few modern twists. Grill jockeys add lump charcoal or charcoal briquettes to a tower-like hopper offset from the cooking chamber. Once lit, the hopper acts like a giant chimney to keep the fuel burning. A thermostat-controlled blower fans the flames (or shuts off) to reach the desired temperatures from 225°F–700°F. Chunks of smoke-wood can be added directly to the fuel or set underneath, to be ignited from falling ash. Whether low-smoking or high-temp grilling, heat from the fire tower is directed beneath a diffuser plate under the cooking chamber; there is no fat dripping directly onto the coals. With a hopper full of fuel, gravity grills can do low-and-slow smoke sessions for eight to 12 hours.



Blackstone Griddles 36" Griddle Cooking Station \$600

THE FUTURE:

Taste the flat of the land

For cottagers with a lot of hungry mouths to feed, the grill of tomorrow isn't even a grill, it's a flat-top griddle, as seen at better diners everywhere. Powered by propane and available in a wide range of sizes, one griddle can do the work of a gas grill, a kitchen stove, and every pot and pan in the cupboard. I recently watched one in action cooking every meal for 10 people over a long weekend. Full breakfasts—with eggs, bacon, hash browns, and even toast and grilled cheese sandwiches—all done outdoors. Flip-and-brown stuff like steaks and burgers and dogs are a snap, and big units have enough cooking area for sautéed onions and mushrooms, warmed sauerkraut, and toasted buns. Basically, anything you can cook with direct heat can be made on a flat-top. And if you serve it straight from the griddle, there are no dishes to wash whatsoever. None. Just scrape grease and food bits into an integral catch pan and you're good to go for the next meal. The grill is dead. All hail the flat-top.—D. Z.

ILLUSTRATION: JARETT SITTER



Traeger Pro 575 Pellet Grill \$1,199

THE INDEPENDENT OPERATOR

PELLET COOKERS

If you are serious about low-and-slow cooking—and other forms of the grilling arts—but want “set it and forget it” convenience, you might want to consider a pellet cooker. Using sophisticated digital controllers, these units take compressed hardwood pellets from a hopper and feed them into a firebox using one or more augers. The same controller actuates fans to increase or decrease the flames, depending on the temperature required, which can be anywhere from around 180°F–650°F. Because they're able to keep a wide range of consistent cooking temperatures, pellet cookers are very good at high- and low-temp indirect cooking, so you can roast chickens or slow-smoke a brisket at the press of a button. And because they use fans to regulate their temperatures, they perform like convection ovens, which keeps an even heat in the cooking chamber and makes them better at general baking than any other grill. Pellet grills

generate lots of smoke at low barbecue temperatures; at high baking and roasting temperatures they impart a very light wood-fire flavour.

While all pellet cookers are good at smoking and baking, some more expensive models get hot enough for direct grilling. This usually requires replacing the heat shield used for indirect cooking with a special direct grilling grate, a warm-up procedure, and the same attention you would give to a charcoal grill.

For anything other than direct grilling, pellet cookers are fully autonomous—some for as long as 24 hours—and many can be fully controlled with a smartphone. More expensive models are heavily built and many are insulated for cold weather cooking. The least expensive pellet grills can be flimsy and suffer from extreme temperature fluctuations, especially in cold weather.



Yoders Smokers YS480S Pellet Grill \$3,499

Former Cottage Life editor David Zimmer would take mustard, not ketchup, to a deserted island. And definitely onions.

THE SWITCH HITTER

OFFSET BARREL SMOKER

With its steam locomotive looks, the iconic offset barrel smoker is a heavy-duty icon. Purpose-built for indirect smoking, it has a large cooking area separated from the firebox with a baffle. Using charcoal and chunks of smoke-wood or relying wholly on smouldering hardwood logs for heat and smoke, offsets can cook a lot of food, for a long time, at very low temperatures. But what if you needed to grill up a few dozen steaks? With a load of hot coals in the main cooking chamber and a grill grate added to the firebox, an offset barrel smoker can also do double-duty as a high-capacity charcoal grill, with two tight-fitting lids and vents for temperature control. It's a very good smoker, but it comes with a learning curve and requires careful fire management. For keen cooks with big barbecue dreams.—D. Z.



Dyna-Glo Signature Series Heavy-Duty Offset Barrel Charcoal BBQ and Smoker \$693