

BRITISH BANGERS

Nine out of ten of you told us you buy sausages, so we've rounded up the best supermarket premium British pork bangers to tickle your tastebuds

When it comes to good sausages, you certainly get what you pay for. Our supermarket taste test winner, the Best Buy Marks & Spencer British Outdoor Bred Pork Sausages, was the priciest at £2.69, but by far and away the tastiest.

You don't seem to mind paying for a decent banger, though. When we asked you what the most important factors were when picking a sausage, price and brand were bottom on your list, while quality of meat and taste were top. And you certainly get through them – according to pork industry body BPEX, we ate 186,210 tonnes of sausages in the year to June 2010.

M&S's winning 76% score meant it was our one and only Best Buy, but if you don't shop there then we found three other supermarket offerings that are worth trying: second-placed Tesco Finest British Traditionally Made Sausages and joint-third Morrisons The Best Thick Pork Sausages and Sainsbury's Taste the Difference Ultimate Pork Sausages.

There were also some poor performers. 'Greasy', 'doughy' and 'chemical-tasting' were some of the words used to describe Porkinson's Pork Bangers and Asda Extra Special Classic Pork Sausages, both of which scored below 50% in our tests. They also had the joint-lowest pork content, at 80% – although this is still twice as much as you'd find in plenty of value bangers.

WHAT WE LOOKED FOR

With sausages, it really is what's on the inside that counts – and all of the ones in our test contained 80% meat or more. However, while decent meat content is important, too much can make a sausage chewy if it's over-mixed,

as the meat can compact into a rubbery pulp. A well-mixed sausage will be more textured. Our experts felt that while M&S, with 97% pork, got it right, Lidl, with 95%, didn't.

The year-round herbs traditionally used in sausages, such as sage, rosemary and thyme, have very strong flavours – so they need to be used sparingly. Our experts felt that some of the sausages, such as those from Asda and The Co-operative, contained too much, leaving a bitter aftertaste.

HOW WE TEST

We chose 10 premium plain pork sausages with an 80% or higher meat content from the nine biggest supermarkets and discounters, as well as Porkinson, the premium sausage from leading manufacturer Kerry Foods. The sausages were grilled, in accordance with the packaging instructions, at Orwells restaurant in Shiplake near Reading, which comes recommended by the *Good Food Guide*.

Our four experts blind-tasted the sausages in a varied order. They scored each sausage out of 10 for its taste, texture, aroma and appearance, and the scores were then weighted, with 50% given to taste. The overall score was converted into a percentage.

Our expert tasters were: Ryan Simpson, owner of Orwells restaurant and winner of the 2010 Good Food Guide's 'up and coming chef' award; Frances Slade, former chair of Ladies in Pigs (LIPs), a national pig judge and judge of numerous taste tests; Keith Fisher, butchery and product development manager at BPEX; and Russell Allen, director of Aubrey Allen butchers, a supplier to top chefs such as Raymond Blanc and Michel Roux Jr.

HOW THEY RATED

SECOND PLACE

Tesco Finest British Traditionally Made Pork Sausages 68% (£2.59, 454g)

Good taste and balance of seasoning, combined with a crumbly texture. A good, juicy sausage, though some felt it was a bit greasy.



JOINT THIRD

Sainsbury's Taste the Difference Ultimate Pork Sausages 67% (£2.59, 400g)

Our experts described Sainsbury's sausages as juicy with a good texture and high meat content, and some of them preferred them to second-placed Tesco.



Morrisons The Best Thick Pork Sausages 67% (£2.59, 454g)

These sausages divided opinion. Some testers thought they were flavoursome and 'greasy in a good way', while others called them 'middle of the road' and 'a bit bland'.



THE WURST

Asda Extra Special Classic Pork Sausages 49% (£1.93, 454g), Porkinson Pork Bangers 44% (£2.47, 398g)

Asda's were described as tasting artificial and metallic, with too many herbs, while Porkinson's had a doughy texture and a chemical taste.

76%**MARKS & SPENCER
BRITISH OUTDOOR BRED
PORK SAUSAGES (£2.69)**Spicy, peppery, moist and
meaty, but not too fatty.
These had the joint-highest
meat content on test, together
with Sainsbury's, at 97%**which?**
**BEST
BUY**

PHOTOGRAPHY BY: SUE ATKINSON

**EXPERT
VIEW****RYAN SIMPSON**

Prussian statesman Otto von Bismarck once said: 'Laws are like sausages, it's better not to see how they are made'. But for chef Ryan Simpson, making his own is the fun part. He told us what he looks for in ingredients, and how he puts together his own bangers.

'A good sausage is about high meat content, crispy skin, no gristle and a nice balance of herbs. And it can't be too fatty.'

'I use high quality ingredients to make my sausages, such as pork shoulder, which has loads of flavour and not too much gristle. I then brine the meat before soaking it and adding other flavours, such as star anise, which makes a great base flavour.'

Evidently sausages have come a long way since the second world war, when the term 'bangers' became popular. The high water content (due to the scarcity of other ingredients) meant sausages often exploded while cooking as the water evaporated. These days, water is kept to a minimum.

'I use some back fat to keep it moist, rather than artificial moisture retainers such as Methocel, which are commonly used,' says Ryan. 'Finally, add some herbs. Typically sage or thyme, but all in moderation so you don't overpower the pork flavour of a good, well-made sausage.'

RYAN SIMPSON
CHEF AT ORWELLSwww.which.co.uk/goodfoodguide**ALSO TESTED****64%** The Co-operative Truly Irresistible
British Pork Sausages (£2.59, 400g)**63%** Waitrose Gourmet Pork Sausages
(£2.59, 400g)**62%** Lidl Milton Gate Pork Sausages*
(£1.99, 400g)**60%** Aldi Ashfield Farm Specially Selected
Pork Chipolatas (£1.99, 375g)