

# Take a stand

Camp cooking's so much more convenient if you have a suitable kitchen unit. **Nick Harding** considers some of the best, plus some key tips on what to look out for



**CAMP KITCHENS** have come a considerable way since those rather flimsy foldout open shelved affairs with a windshield parked on top. True, the fewer the working parts, the less there is to go wrong, but nowadays we're all into features such as hooks for utensils, kitchen roll holders, mesh bins of all sizes – even lantern holders.

We've assembled a selection of some of the best, but in nearly every case it's just the one we've picked out from a series, so do look out for any that may be more appropriate for you. You'll find prices are a movable feast (pun intended), so do be prepared to shop around – we've offered simply guide prices here.

There's a wide choice of kitchens available – but some are very similar...

We've also considered overall workspace, storage, stability and pack size, plus ease of construction.

Working height is a key factor, too – and families may find that split-levels might just be incentive to get the kids involved? Measurements and weights are as supplied by the manufacturers – although in a few cases we had to resort to the *Camping tape measure*.

We used a Cadac double-burner as our 'control' cooker for this test. It has a larger footprint than most cookers of this ilk, and its cast iron griddles meant it provided a good test for worktop size and stability.

• All the products tested here come

with their own carry bags unless we say otherwise. And all have the facility to be pegged down for extra stability, except the Coleman Pack-Away and Gelert Beyond.

OK, these aren't the most sophisticated or technical outdoor items you're going to buy, but it's still worth speaking to your specialist camping retailer and getting his/her advice – as well as keeping an eye on changing prices and special offers.

Finally, do consider the usage you expect from your kitchen. Will it be set up just for the annual fortnight holiday, or are you expecting to set it up every time you go camping?

Ready, chef? ■

## Top tips

Does it work for you? As ever, we always recommend visiting a specialist outdoor retailer to see the product for yourself and get a working demonstration from a salesperson that knows what they're talking about. But, do consider first what features you think absolute essentials, which would be useful to have, and which ones you can happily do without.

Working height is definitely a factor. Again, it's what's most comfortable to you. Left hand, right hand? Most of the units here lean towards being more practical for right-handers. It's unlikely to be a major

issue, but could be a determining factor in which kitchen you buy.

We're divided on lantern holders. None here offered any kind of height adjustment, and there's always the concern that shadows will be cast over work surfaces.

Here's a useful tip if there's a bit of construction involved in your kitchen. Use silicon spray on the ends of any poles – it ensures they slip more easily into their holders.

Other uses? Some of these could have alternative uses beyond camping – at

home indoors or out, at the beach etc.

Despite the generally sturdy nature of these units, as ever our advice is don't be tempted to cook in your tent.

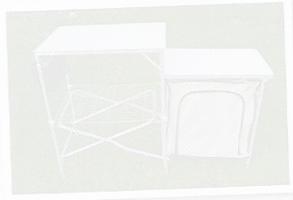
Shop around. We've offered guide prices here, but typically prices will vary throughout the season. More important than picking up a bargain is making sure you get the right product to suit your needs, of course.

Weight isn't such an issue with these, but size is. Make sure you can fit it into your vehicle and/or trailer, along with all your other gear.

## KAMPA COMMANDER FIELD KITCHEN

Arrived just in time for our test, then instantly proved itself a very practical performer

**Key features** Split levels; small mesh bin; utensil hooks; open mesh lower shelf; two-shelved larder



**Dimensions** (width x depth x height) 59 x 42 x 67/81cm

**Pack size** 50 x 80 x 17cm

**Guide price** £55

**Camping says** Our favourite of them all tested here, and not just because it was up in a trice. Windshield is an extra, but that's not necessarily a bad thing if your cooker already has one. The only disappointment was the slightly flimsy nature of the two cupboard shelves

**CONTACT** [kampa.co.uk](http://kampa.co.uk)

## OUTWELL DAUPHIN KITCHEN TABLE

There's some work involved in constructing this, but it's worth it. Not small so more suited to family use on main holidays

**Key features** Soft PVC basin; fully enclosed storage, including space for gas cylinder (or bin); windshield; pockets; adjustable feet



**Dimensions** (width x depth x height) 121 x 48 x 83cm

**Pack size** 121 x 40 x 10cm

**Guide price** £80

**Camping says** That bit pricier, that bit extra quality, as we've come to expect from the leading family camping brand. We liked the fully enclosed storage, but question whether black's heat attracting and retaining qualities make it suitable for storing all foods here. Collapsible basin is neat, for water or dirty utensils

**CONTACT** [outwell.com](http://outwell.com)

## BEYOND BY GELERT SUPERIOR UNIT WITH WASHBOWL

New for this season and not featured on Gelert's website at the time of our research

**Key features** Small washbowl; lantern pole; utensil rack; mesh bin; board work surface; steel tubing

**Dimensions** (width x depth x height) 100 x 50 x 76.5/193cm

**Pack size** 88 x 46 x 10cm

**Guide price** £70

**Camping says** Sturdy and straightforward to put up. At 12.3kg, not the lightest.

We like the way the lid closes down for use as a worktop for food preparation, or acts as

a huge splatter screen in the up position.

Big mesh bin is a boon, too. That small bowl can be useful, but it precludes any work surface. Indeed, the whole unit folds down neatly and quickly enough, but loose struts and the bin frame proved a bit annoying when stowing away. Otherwise, one of our favourites here

**CONTACT** [gelert.com](http://gelert.com)



## ROYAL KITCHEN STAND WITH STORAGE

Appears a direct copy of the Outwell Dauphin above, but lacks some of the finer details (luminous zip pulls, grommeted table hole etc), although it does boast utensil hooks riveted to the side of the work surface

**Key points** As Outwell above

**Dimensions** (width x depth x height) 121 x 48 x 83cm

**Pack size** 121 x 40 x 10cm

**Guide price** £65

**Camping says** As per the Outwell above, but note the price difference. Not the easiest to construct, and indeed we have concerns over the tension on some of the material/stitching. You should be able to shop around for keener pricing than the guide price we're suggesting. Unfortunately, Royal's website is something of a disaster area



## SUNNCAMP MULTIFUNCTION UTILITY KITCHEN



**Foldout design looks intricate, but is simplicity itself, with no less than eight ground contact points.**

**Removable aluminium slatted table** is pinned to stay sturdy while you get at the washing-up bowl (not supplied) below.

**Key features** Windshield; space below main worktop for washing-up bowl; draining rack and storage shelf; two foldable side tables with hooks plus kitchen towel rail; steel legs

**Dimensions** (width x depth x height) 150 x 45 x 88cm

**Pack size** 100 x 50 x 12

**Guide price** £65

**Camping says** No problem with left- or right-hand bias here. Definitely one of the sturdier designs and far easier to set up than the looks may suggest

**CONTACT** [sunncamp.co.uk](http://sunncamp.co.uk)

## COLEMAN PACK-AWAY KITCHEN

At 6.25kg, the lightest here, but it rather felt it. Packs neatly into its own folded tabletop

**Key features** One-piece frame; adjustable struts designed to accommodate any cooker; mesh storage shelf; lantern and utensils stands; aluminium

**Dimensions** (width x depth x height) 82 x 54 x 79cm

**Pack size** 82 x 30 x 12cm

**Guide price** £85

**Camping says** Pack-away packs in a lot of features. Sliding stove supports are novel, but you may find it's set a little low. It could alternatively take a washing-up bowl as shown here. We also had doubts about the strength of the cross-members. Pricey



**CONTACT** [coleman.eu](http://coleman.eu)

## GELERT XL/VANGO COMPACT/WYNNSTER BBQ TABLE WITH SIDE SHELVES

Too similar to be treated separately, these. Gelert's French Navy plays Vango's plain black in a fuss-free design with enclosed storage, while Wynnster's can be considered the 'naked' version (ie no material cupboard)

**Key features** Windshield; fabric storage cupboard with two removable shelves on Gelert and Vango; three worktops; three storage pockets; aluminium



frame; polyester material

**Dimensions** (width x depth x height) 143 x 48 x 80/111cm

**Pack size** 80 x 44 x 10cm

**Guide price** £55-60

**Camping says** Lightweight but stable enough. Gelert is producing some really nice furniture these days, with designs that are easy to work with. The Vango has finer mesh in the cupboard door. Asked to choose, we'd go for the Gelert with its light blue colouring – as long as it doesn't clash with your tent!

**CONTACT** [gelert.com](http://gelert.com), [vango.co.uk](http://vango.co.uk), [wynnst.com](http://wynnst.com)

