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Best Nugget Ice Makers of 2024

By **Timothy J. Forster**



Reviewed by **Marlo Jappen Porto**

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The best nugget ice makers can help elevate your beverages. These machines produce a different type of ice than what you get from traditional ice cube trays. They work by combining water and air to create a slushy mixture that is pushed through a cylindrical mold into the ice nuggets you'll use. These soft, chewable nuggets – which are also called “pebble ice” or “Sonic ice” (a nod to the fast-food restaurant that uses this type of ice) – are known for cooling drinks quickly and absorbing flavors.

If you're looking to make this type of ice at home, we did the research and compiled a list of the best nugget ice makers that will work in your kitchen.

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Best Overall

GE Profile Opal 2.0 Nugget Ice Maker with Side...



PROS:

- ✓ Large, 3-pound ice bin
- ✓ Self-cleaning function
- ✓ Extra water tank so you don't have to frequently refill the machine

CONS:

- ✗ High price tag compared to competitors
- ✗ Takes up a lot of countertop space

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This high-tech machine from GE is fast, yielding ice in as little as 10 minutes. Reviewers say it makes high-quality ice that’s soft and chewable. However, it costs \$629, which is on the steep side. Its high-end features might make its price tag worth it for some, however. When linked with the SmartHQ app, you can monitor the Opal 2.0 from your smartphone. It’s also compatible with voice assistants like Amazon Alexa and Google Assistant.

This GE ice maker has a side tank to allow you to make three times as much ice without needing to refill the machine and a self-cleaning feature that prevents bacteria and helps keep your ice fresh. It’s available in stainless black or steel designs and has a neat LED display.

Specs:

Price:	\$629
Dimensions:	16.5 in. H x 13.43 in. W x 17.5 in. D
Ice Bin Capacity:	3 lbs.
Daily Ice Production:	Up to 38 lbs.

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Best Budget

AGLucky Auseo Nugget Countertop Ice Maker »

**PROS:**

- ✓ High ice-making capacity for a low price
- ✓ Easy-to-use single-button operation
- ✓ Self-cleaning function

CONS:

- ✗ No smart features
- ✗ Fairly small ice bin

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Generally speaking, nugget ice makers are not particularly cheap – but this machine is more affordable than many options and it has a lot to offer. It's capable of producing 33 pounds of ice in a day and can make a batch of nine ice nuggets within 6 to 8 minutes. It has a one-button operation system with lights that alert you when it's time to fill the water tank and if the storage bucket is full. Its storage bin isn't huge, though, with room for just 1.5 pounds of ice. But this is a small machine, making it a good pick for those short on space.

Notably, the AGLucky Auseo Nugget Countertop Ice Maker has a self-cleaning function, although you'll need to pull a plug inside the machine to

drain the water. This ice machine is available in a range of colors, including red and green.

Specs:

Price: \$229.99 on AG Lucky; \$188.99 on Amazon

Dimensions: 14.5 in. H x 12.5 in. W x 9.9 in. D

Ice Bin Capacity: 1.5 lbs.

Daily Ice Production: Up to 33 lbs.

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Best With Dispenser

KBice 2.0 Self-Dispensing Nugget Ice Maker »



PROS:

- ✓ No need for a scooper
- ✓ Self-cleaning function
- ✓ Easy to refill

CONS:

- ✗ May not work with hard tap water
- ✗ Takes 30 minutes to produce ice

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Nugget ice makers with dispensers like this model from KBice don’t require users to scoop up their ice. This machine is simple to use, with a three-button panel at the front (including a button to dispense ice straight into your cup), and features a modern, black-and-silver design that should complement most kitchens.

With this unit, you won’t need to remove a water tank to refill its water supply, as fresh water can be poured into a spout on the front of the machine. On the downside, the KBice 2.0 is slower than many competitors, taking about 30 minutes to produce its first batch of ice. That said, it can make a respectable 32 pounds of ice per day, if running continuously. Take note: If you live in a place with hard tap water, the machine may not work, and you might have to use filtered water or purchase a distilled option.

Specs:

Price:	\$589
Dimensions:	17.5 in. H x 12 in. W x 16 in. D
Ice Bin Capacity:	2 lbs.
Daily Ice Production:	Up to 32 lbs.

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Best Portable

Newair 26-pound Countertop Nugget Ice Make...



PROS:

- ✓ Compact
- ✓ Relatively affordable
- ✓ Large viewing window

CONS:

- ✗ Rather limited ice storage capacity
- ✗ Reviewers say it doesn't make ice as soft as other machines

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For a no-fuss nugget ice maker, consider this model from Newair. At 26 pounds, it's the lightest of several nugget ice makers that the company offers, and it features an intuitive push-button interface.

Thanks to its small size (it's less than 9 inches deep), it won't occupy too much space on your countertop and is easy to bring with you on trips. The size does bring some limitations: this Newair model can't churn out as much

ice per day as some other models, including other Newair options, although it has a respectable 26-pound maximum output. Its storage bin for ice is a little on the small side, with room for 1.76 pounds of prepared ice. It's available in either a matte black or stainless steel finish, and, with a price tag of \$299.99, it's relatively affordable.

Specs:

Price:	\$299.99
Dimensions:	12.7 in. H x 11.3 in. W x 8.7 in. D
Ice Bin Capacity:	1.76 lbs.
Daily Ice Production:	Up to 26 lbs.

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Best for Parties

Newair 44-pound Countertop Nugget Ice Make...

**PROS:**

- ✓ Stylish black design with lit-up ice storage
- ✓ Produces ice in 10 minutes
- ✓ Makes a lot of ice (44 pounds a day)

CONS:

- ✗ Limited capacity in ice storage bin
- ✗ Only comes in one color option

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If you need a nugget ice maker that can pump out a good quantity of ice without breaking the bank, this model from Newair should cover your bases. With the ability to produce up to 44 pounds of ice per day (and with the first batch ready in less than 10 minutes), it can churn out more of that chewy nugget ice than any other machine in this guide, making it suitable for catering to guests.

Considering its substantial ice-making capacity, this Newair machine, which costs \$399.99, is reasonably priced compared to competitors. With a self-cleaning function, it's easy to maintain. Plus, its black design with a window

into the ice storage gives it a modern and sophisticated look. There’s also a blue LED that can be switched on or off.

Specs:

Price:	\$399.99
Dimensions:	16.54 in. H x 9.84 in. W x 15.04 in. D
Ice Bin Capacity:	3.3 lbs.
Daily Ice Production:	Up to 44 lbs.

EXPAND LIST ▾

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The Bottom Line

Differentiating between nugget ice makers is a little tricky: Most options meet basic benchmarks like a decent ice-making capacity and a self-cleaning function, although some stand out with extra features like Wi-Fi connectivity. In some cases, we noticed that ice makers seemed to run into mechanical issues not long after people bought them (and in one case, a model we didn’t recommend was partially recalled). This is likely because nugget ice makers are relatively complex machines, and home-use models are still relatively new to the market, so it seems manufacturers are still ironing out issues. As a result, it’s best to check the warranty when you’re buying one. The options we recommended offer a one-year guarantee at minimum.

Things To Consider When Buying a Nugget Ice Maker

Size: Nugget ice makers can vary substantially in terms of size, and larger appliances will typically be able to store more ice (although they may not necessarily be much faster at making it). So, when you're buying such a device, it may be a bit of a trade-off between the ice production capacity of the ice maker versus the amount of space in your kitchen.

Sizes can vary quite a bit, but in terms of the countertop ice makers, the smallest ones can be under 10 inches wide. Nugget ice makers are usually taller and deeper than they are wide, so you may need room for an appliance that's around 15 to 20 inches tall, as well as 15 to 20 inches deep.

If you want to store the nugget ice maker away to make space when it's not in use, bear in mind that it may need to be plugged in for longer extended periods to make the ice (and keep it cold when it's done) – this isn't like a stand mixer or a food processor, where it can be taken out from the cupboard, used for 10 minutes, and put back.

Yield and Speed: When on the market for a nugget ice maker, two crucial factors to consider are the device's yield and speed. "Yield" refers to the amount of ice the machine can produce within a specific timeframe. If you often entertain or have a high demand for ice, opting for a model with a higher yield is essential to ensure a constant and plentiful supply. Yield tends to be measured on a 24-hour basis (that is, how much ice the machine can produce in a day), but it may be more useful to break it down to a per-hour basis. Nugget ice makers for home use tend to make around 1 to 2 pounds per hour.

Speed refers to how fast an ice maker can start producing ice that's ready for you to use. While speed and yield can be linked, it's possible to find machines that make small batches quickly, but that still have a more limited yield on a grander scale. If you need a steady supply of ice, you'll want to pay attention to yield, whereas if you need just a little bit in a short amount of time, speed may be a more important measurement.

Ice Storage Capacity: Speed isn't everything when it comes to ice makers, notes Heather Wibbels. "Some of them might generate a lot of ice really quickly but its repository is very small," she says. Instead, she suggests looking at how much ice the machine can make and how much it can hold.

But, keep in mind that even a bigger countertop machine won't be able to store enough ice for a large family or a dinner party to all use at once. Depending on size and efficiency, ice makers can store up to 2 to 5 pounds of ice. That might sound like a lot, but consider this: If you're hosting a dinner party, professional planners recommend having 2 to 4 pounds of ice per guest. That's far more than most countertop devices can store, so if you're using your ice machine to entertain, you'll often need to run it and store the ice in the freezer – since home ice makers may be able to make as much as 48 pounds per day (if run constantly). Under-counter ice makers are an option if you really need that storage, but they could cost you thousands more dollars.

That said, there's still one advantage for buyers who opt for a larger storage capacity: It'll take longer to fill up, so if you're making larger volumes of ice, you won't have to shift that ice over to the freezer quite if you're trying to make a lot of it. On the other hand, if you want a device that takes up less space and you only need ice on-demand for, say, a couple or a small family, you may want to opt for one with less storage.

Design and Aesthetics: There's not a huge variety when it comes to design choices for nugget ice makers. While there are some models that come in a range of colors, including brighter reds or blues, your choices are more likely to be limited to relatively straightforward and plain options like stainless steel and black. If you have a sleek, modern kitchen, these colors may fit in easily, but they could seem a little more out of place in a kitchen with more natural tones and textures like wood.

Ease of Use and Maintenance: Nugget ice makers for home use are generally very simple to use. Many models can be operated with just a button or two: For example, one button to switch the machine on, and another to activate its cleaning cycle. Most nugget ice makers are fairly easy to maintain as well, with self-cleaning cycles that you can activate at the push of a button. Be sure to read the product's instructions to see if you need to clean the machine with any special substances (like a descaling agent).

Also, keep an eye out for the way that nugget ice makers source their water: most options simply operate with a water tank that you can refill from a tap or a bottle, not unlike a coffee machine. However, there are a few at-home models that feature a water line, and while this may be a positive for people who don't want to refill water tanks regularly, it may be cumbersome to arrange for the water to be hooked up to the machine.

Additional Features: Home nugget ice makers tend to keep things fairly simple, without too many bells and whistles: you fill up a water tank, switch the machine on, and that water is converted to ice, which is dropped down into a storage bin in the machine. For most buyers, a self-cleaning function would be the most important extra feature to look out for, but this seems to be pretty standard across most machines. Other features you may encounter include a light for the machine or the ice storage bin, which should be able to be switched on and off as needed. It's also possible to find extra features like a filtration system that recycles melted ice back into the machine's tank (which the top-rated GE Opal 2.0 does). While not exactly common, it's even possible to find nugget ice makers with WiFi capability, if you're a fan of smart devices – although, considering the generally high price tags of these machines, not all customers will want to pay for these kinds of features.

How We Chose the Best Nugget Ice Makers

At U.S. News 360 Reviews, our editors and contributors consulted with experts, including award-winning mixologist [Heather Wibbels](#) and [Camper English](#), cocktail writer and author of "The Ice Book," to find out what consumers should look for when they're considering buying a home ice maker. We also consulted professional reviews from both mainstream lifestyle publications as well as food and drink industry sources, conducting both quantitative and qualitative analysis. For the former, we considered how often a particular brand or model was flagged as a good product, and for the latter, we analyzed commentary on what contributed to certain products being labeled as top-quality products. In some circumstances, consumer reviews may be considered, but only from confirmed buyers, and with a careful eye to specifics (that is, we do not consider simple star ratings).

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U.S. News & World Report editors and contributors have years of experience analyzing, comparing, researching, and reviewing all sorts of consumer products and appliances. [Timothy J. Forster](#), the author of this piece, is a freelance food and lifestyle writer with professional experience in both commercial and home kitchens, so he's no stranger to all sorts of kitchen appliances and has a particular eye for

products that are durable and reliable while understanding the trade-offs that may apply when shopping for budget-friendly options.

FAQ

Why do some people prefer nugget ice over traditional ice cubes? +

How do nugget ice makers work? +

How do you clean a nugget ice maker? +

Why are nugget ice makers so expensive? +

About Our Team



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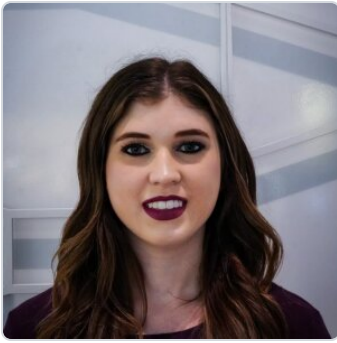
Tim Forster is a freelance journalist and editor specializing in everything from technology and startups, including consumer technology services and business software. His work can be found in publications including ReWire, Vulture, i-D, Canvas8, Teen Vogue, and Maisonneuve Magazine.

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Marlo Jappen Porto is a former editor for U.S. News 360 Reviews, focusing on home goods. Prior to joining the team, she was a researcher at NBCUniversal, where she gathered compelling and relevant archival content for live broadcasts. In addition, she has spent years working as an editor and community journalist.

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