

Breville Joule Turbo review: sous vide with speed

Sous vide cooking has a lot of advantages. It can make a cheap cut of meat taste like an expensive one, it can deliver unparalleled juiciness and tenderness, and it can do all of that while being just about idiot-proof. It also has some disadvantages, chief among them being that it's slow. I can think of several occasions when I wanted to sous vide something for dinner, only to realize that it would be 11PM by the time it was done. Well, the new \$250 Breville Joule Turbo Sous Vide promises to cut cook times by as much as half, and it does it with the power of some serious math.

A quick refresher for those who need it. Sous vide is a cooking technique that uses a circulating immersion heater to bring a bath of water to a very specific temperature and keep it there. That water never touches the food, though (unless you're hard-boiling eggs). Instead, you season the food as you like and then put it in a plastic or silicone bag, press all the air out, and drop it in that hot water bath. When it's all done, you give it a quick sear just for that Maillard reaction flavor (akin to caramelization), plate it, and eat it.

8Verge Score

Breville Joule Turbo

\$ 249.95

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The Bad

- Expensive
- App is missing non-Turbo recipes
- No controls on the device itself

How we rate and review products

This technique is especially beneficial for meats because it's essentially impossible to overcook or undercook them. If you think 131 degrees Fahrenheit is the perfect temperature for your steak, you set the water to 131 degrees and put it in there. As long as you give it enough time, the entire steak will come to exactly 131 degrees, meaning it's perfect all the way through, even if your guests get stuck in a snowstorm and it ends up cooking for six hours.

In fact, for cheaper, leaner cuts of meat, slower is generally better. These cuts tend to be leaner and have a lot of connective tissue. Cooking them slowly allows the collagen to melt and brings out amazing savory flavors, but because it's all bagged up, it can't dry out, so all those juices stay right where they're supposed to be.

The Joule Turbo is the new and improved version of the original ChefSteps Joule sous vide. Breville bought ChefSteps a few years ago, so now it's called the Breville Joule Turbo (this caused a bit of confusion when I couldn't get the ChefSteps Joule app to work with the new device. I just had to install the Breville Joule app instead).

Like the original, the Joule Turbo is a handsome and compact device. It's just over 12 inches long and just under two inches in diameter, so it fits easily in virtually any kitchen drawer, which I love. Truth be told, there's virtually no

visible difference between the original and the Turbo hardware-wise. I was told that Breville has a “higher standard for longevity” than perhaps ChefSteps did, so the internal components have been made a bit more robust. The only thing that’s obvious is that it’s an inch or so taller, and it now sports a tougher “Breville plug” on the power cord.

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dark: [>a]: shadow-underline-gray-63”>*The Joule’s strong clip keeps it in place while it cooks.*

The good news is that everything that was good about the original hasn’t changed with the Turbo. Despite its diminutive size, water still heats up faster than any other sous vide I’ve tested. It’s also capable of heating a bath as large as 10 gallons, which is truly massive, but its water inlet is low, so it can also run in just a few inches of water (the magnetic foot helps stabilize it in a pot, and the robust metal clip on the side will hold it in place, too).

The bad news is that there are still no manual controls on the device itself. A simple knob and display would go a long way here, as sometimes you just want to put the thing in some water, set it, and walk away. Instead, using the smartphone app is mandatory, which connects to it via Bluetooth or Wi-Fi.

That inconvenience aside, the app is generally excellent. Once you’re plugged in and connected, you just choose a recipe, like a salmon steak, for example. The app walks you through everything you need to do and has “visual doneness” videos, which show you what your food will look like depending on which temperature you choose. With the salmon example, set it to 104F (40C) for “soft and buttery,” 113F (45C) for “delicate and juicy,” 122F (50C) for “tender and flaky” (which gets Breville’s “our fave” designation), or 131F (55C) for “pieceny and firm.” For each of those options, there’s a short video of

a fork pulling apart a salmon steak cooked to that corresponding temp, showing you what the texture will be like. It's very simple but incredibly effective, as it eliminates a lot of the guesswork if you're cooking something new. The various meats actually did turn out like the videos suggested in my tests, which is to say pretty incredible.

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dark: [& > a]: shadow- underline- gray- 63"> *Sous vide cooking allows
you to evenly cook your meats without overcooking any part of
it.*

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process is done, it's important to sear the food in a pan to
finish it off.*

It's worth noting that there's a potential integration coming down the pipe. Breville also makes the Joule Oven Air Fryer Pro (\$550), which is arguably the smartest air fryer / toaster oven out there. It, too, has deep app integrations, so it would make sense that the two Breville apps could talk with each other and work together. When speaking with Breville, they talked about the potential of starting a cook with the Joule Turbo and then finishing it in the Joule Air Fryer. Perhaps it could also help coordinating the sides in the oven so they're all ready at the same time. That all remains to be seen, though, and you shouldn't buy the Joule Turbo today with the expectation that integration will ever arrive.

Ultimately, the Joule Turbo is terrific, but it also feels like an incremental upgrade from the original. That's not a bad thing, really, since the original is still one of the best you can buy. If you don't already have a sous vide, this is an

easy rec. It's compact but powerful, it looks good, and the food it produces is truly delicious. The Turbo feature really is nice, and considering that cook time is often a barrier to entry for people, this faster way to sous vide is very much welcome, and hopefully, more recipes (looking at you, fish) will be added soon. At \$250, it's on the steeper side when it comes to home sous vide devices (you can get very solid ones for under \$100), but it's easily the best sous vide app out there, and it does a lot of hand-holding to walk you through it if you're new. If you already have the original Joule, you qualify for \$75 off the new one.

Overall, it's very worth your time and conveniently asks less of it.

Photography by Brent Rose for The Verge

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Every smart device now requires you to agree to a series of terms and conditions before you can use it – contracts that no one actually reads. It's impossible for us to read and analyze every single one of these agreements. But we started counting exactly how many times you have to hit "agree" to use devices when we review them since these are agreements most people don't read and definitely can't negotiate.

To use the Breville Joule Turbo, you must download and install Breville's app.

When installing and using the app, you agree to:

- Breville's
- Breville's

To pair the Joule Turbo to the app, you must create a Breville account and give the app permission to use Bluetooth.

Total: four mandatory steps to use the Joule Turbo.

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