



The \$449 SousVide Supreme: Worth It?

Reviews of the newly introduced SousVide Supreme—the \$449 home version of the \$1,000 machines that the world's best restaurants have been using for the last decade or so—have been streaming in from all over the internet, and have thus far been overwhelmingly positive. PR machine at work, or is it worth the hype?

I got my own in the mail, and had it for about a month, during which time I cooked over 35 distinct food items in it, low temperature and high temperature, protein and vegetable, long (two days plus) and short (30 minutes) cooking times. I tested it at every point with a probe thermometer and monitored its temperature over the course of three days.

I put it through every sort of abuse a home cook might inflict upon it, and I'm glad to report that it does everything you'd expect a sous-vide machine to do. It holds its temperature (in all my testing, only one item ended up overcooked—an egg that was cooking in the bottom of a machine set at 140°F with at least a dozen other bags of food in it), it holds it indefinitely and evenly, and despite a lack of a pump in there, it somehow manages to circulate water all around the food (I am told via a sophisticated computer that controls convection currents in the unit—one reason why it's so expensive).

That said, the SousVide Supreme has the same limits that any sous-vide cooking has: your food will not get browned, and it will not develop any of the flavors associated with cooking methods that keep your food exposed to air, or that allow sauces to slowly reduce (such as braising, stewing, or roasting).

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“Makes it possible to cook a 12-course meal for six people out of an apartment kitchen, with every protein coming out perfectly cooked”



The other downside is that the SousVide Supreme provides everything you need *except* the sous-vide part. For that, you'll have to buy your own vacuum sealer. While an industrial grade chamber vac, or a good FoodSaver might be nice, I found that the Reynold's Handi Vac the folks at SousVide Supreme provided for me to do my testing (not included with the actual machine) was more than adequate. Sure, there was the occasional bag that didn't seal (but that was easy to catch and fix), but the advantages



were numerous: reusable bags (less wasted plastic!), cheap, portables, and the ability to add liquid ingredients, thanks to the well-designed double-seal on the unit.

The greatest advantage for me is the fact that the sous-vide machine allows you to cook and hold as many different proteins as you'd like, —a nearly impossible task with traditional cooking methods. Of course, such elaborate meals take plenty of forethought.

For example, say I wanted to cook a meal that starts with a dish of slow cooked eggs, followed by halibut, followed by duck, and finally with a poached apple. The day before, I'd have to set my machine to 183°F and drop in the apples. The next afternoon, I'd lower the temp to 140°F and put in my eggs. A few hours later, I'd set the machine to 120°F and add the duck.

Finally, just before the meal, I'd lower it to 115°F, and drop the halibut. So by the time my meal starts, every dish is already cooked and being held at 115°F—hot enough to eat, but cool enough not to cook further.

To serve, I just open up the appropriate bag for the course, finish the plate, and I'm good to go. Like I said—the machine will save you lots of work, but still expect to do just as much, if not more planning.



It's an exciting time for home cookery as home cooks are becoming more and more sophisticated and knowledgeable (I hope in small part due to the efforts of the present writer), and are demanding the ingredients and technology to suit their needs.

It may be some time before sous-vide becomes as standard as say, the microwave, but give it a couple of years, a few more cookbooks, and a slight reduction in price (economies of scale are bound to help), and we might be seeing what amounts to a full-on paradigm shift.

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