

Ditching Plastic for Glass

Glass food storage containers are more popular than ever. We found the best set on the market.

➤ BY VALERIE SIZHE LI ➤

Glass food storage containers are useful for meal-prepping, packing up leftovers, or storing pantry items. Amid rising concerns about plastic containers, glass options are growing in popularity. Unlike plastic, glass containers can be washed in the dishwasher at high heat with no concerns about micro- or nanoplastics shedding and entering your food. They can also be safely used in the microwave and, in most cases, the oven too. We also liked serving food directly in the glass containers.

There are cons. Glass can shatter; it's also heavy, making it less ideal for transport while weighing down a fridge shelf. While some glass containers have glass lids, most come with plastic lids. For those who want to minimize their use of plastic, though, these tradeoffs may well be worth it.

We tested a wide range of sets. Although you can buy glass storage containers à la carte, it's more cost-effective to purchase them in a set, and it's nice to have a variety of sizes in order to store things as efficiently as possible.

We focused on sets with at least four containers. The glass containers trended smaller than plastic, likely due to weight—glass gets heavy quickly. Only one glass set had a container that held more than 9 cups. Instead, the large ones typically topped out at 5 to 8 cups. We think specific capacities matter less than getting a set with a good range of sizes from small to large. Smaller containers are useful for sauces, dips, and those extra 2 tablespoons of tomato paste; the medium sizes are good for a salad or sandwich; and the biggest containers are suitable for, say, a batch of soup or lasagna for four.

Not All Glass Containers Are the Same

We came across two types of glass: soda lime and borosilicate. The former is relatively tough and cheap to produce, but it expands and contracts more than other types of glass when the temperature changes and thus is prone to shattering, an effect known as thermal shock. To solve this, some manufacturers use heat to strengthen soda-lime glass, a process called tempering, so you may also see containers made from “tempered glass.”

Borosilicate is less susceptible to heat-related cracking. However, it's less tough than soda lime when it comes to physical impact, so it's less likely to survive a drop.

What to Look for

➤ **GASKETS:** To make the containers leakproof, a gasket on the lid was a must. One set had press-down lids with no gasket. Because the containers didn't seal tightly, liquid spilled everywhere when we shook them. Of the sets with gaskets, we preferred those that were permanently attached to the lids; we liked that we didn't have to take the gasket out, clean it separately, and then nudge it back into place once it was dry.

➤ **SECURE LATCHES:** We liked latches that swung smoothly and locked firmly into place with a gentle push.



➤ **FLAT LIDS:** Flat lids meant we could stack the containers, allowing us to use our fridge and freezer space more efficiently. Some containers had slightly domed lids, which made stacking precarious.

➤ **WIDE RIMS:** People often use glass containers for heating foods in microwaves and ovens, and it's important to be able to hold the containers comfortably and safely while they're hot. Some had wider rims, and we liked having the extra space to grab on to. It was especially noticeable when we had bulky oven mitts on.



OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

➤ **PLASTIC VERSUS GLASS LIDS:** Glass containers with plastic lids were lighter overall than those with glass lids; our winner had plastic lids, and we preferred them for this reason. But glass lids have advantages too. They can be washed in the dishwasher and be used in the microwave. We liked one set, from Bentgo, that had glass lids with vents that pop open, so you can reheat leftovers without the food drying out or splattering everywhere.

➤ **CONTAINER SHAPE:** Some sets included containers in two or more shapes, such as round, square, or rectangular. We found that when you have an assortment of shapes, you need more space for storing the containers when they're not in use; we had to stack or nest the containers in multiple piles according to their shapes. A set in one shape will be simplest to store, but some people like options, and we found great sets in each style. Shape ultimately comes down to a personal choice: Think about what shape you want to eat from, serve from, and store in your cupboards to guide your decision.

The two types of glass also have different limitations when it comes to exposure to heat. While all are microwave-safe, only the borosilicate sets and one soda-lime set were oven-safe to at least 500 degrees. Most other soda-lime sets were safe to 450 degrees, except one that wasn't oven-safe at all. Despite these variations in their maximum heat-safe temperatures, we didn't find performance differences between the two types of glass after extensive heating and abuse tests. Other factors proved more important. Here's what we learned.

—Edited by Kate Shannon Levine



What We Tested

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED		COMMENTS
WINNER RUBBERMAID Brilliance Glass Food Storage Containers MODEL: 2118308 PRICE: \$63.99 CONTAINS: One 8-cup, one 4.7-cup, two 3.2-cup, two 2-cup, and three 1.3-cup containers SHAPE: Rectangular MATERIAL: Soda-lime glass containers, plastic lids, silicone gaskets OVENSAFE TO: 450 degrees PERFORMANCE: ★★★ EASE OF USE: ★★½ DURABILITY: ★★★ CLEANUP: ★★★		We enjoyed using this sturdy, durable set. We liked the light-weight, plastic lids; they were easy to press down, close, and open. The seals on the containers remained effective throughout our tests and never leaked. The lids had tiny air vents that reduced the resistance we experienced when we pressed down on the lids, making them fit more snugly. We were able to carry hot dishes around comfortably and safely thanks to the extra-wide rims on the containers. The lids were flat with slightly raised edges, helping the containers stack neatly and securely on top of one another without slipping off.
RECOMMENDED		
BEST (ALMOST) ALL-GLASS OPTION BENTGO Signature Leak-Proof Glass Food Storage MODEL: n/a PRICE: \$59.99 CONTAINS: One 6.3-cup, one 4.4-cup, one 4.1-cup, one 2.7-cup, and two 1.6-cup containers SHAPE: Rectangular and round MATERIAL: Borosilicate containers, tempered soda-lime glass lids, silicone gaskets OVENSAFE TO: 950 degrees PERFORMANCE: ★★½ EASE OF USE: ★★ DURABILITY: ★★★ CLEANUP: ★★½		This set had lids made from glass with silicone gaskets, making it our top option for those who want to avoid as much plastic as possible. There were vents in the lids, which were helpful when microwaving food in these containers, as we didn't have to take off the lids. The containers withstood hot and freezing temperatures. Although the lids didn't have latches, the attached gaskets ensured a tight seal. They were also easy to clean; we love that the glass lids can be safely washed in the dishwasher. However, the lids retained a bit of odor after thoroughly washing and drying them.
RECOMMENDED WITH RESERVATIONS		
OXO GOOD GRIPS Smart Seal Glass Container Set MODEL: n/a PRICE: \$32.99 CONTAINS: One 3.5-cup, one 1.6-cup, two 1-cup, and two 4-ounce containers SHAPE: Rectangular and round MATERIAL: Borosilicate containers, plastic lids, silicone gaskets OVENSAFE TO: 550 degrees PERFORMANCE: ★★★ EASE OF USE: ★½ DURABILITY: ★★★ CLEANUP: ★½		The latches on these containers kept a seal tight and never leaked during testing, but they were quite stiff. Although the gaskets were easy to remove, we found that the channels that housed them were a bit hard to clean. Despite our best efforts to wash them, the lids retained odors. The gaskets were also thick, making it hard to press down on the lids, and together with the stiff latches, these containers required significantly more force than other sets to shut.
ELLO Duraglass Multi Pack Meal Prep Containers MODEL: n/a PRICE: \$47.99 CONTAINS: One 5-cup, two 3.4-cup, one 1.75-cup, and one 1-cup containers SHAPE: Rectangular MATERIAL: Soda-lime containers, silicone sleeves, plastic lids, silicone gaskets OVENSAFE TO: 450 degrees PERFORMANCE: ★★★ EASE OF USE: ★★ DURABILITY: ★★★ CLEANUP: ★		The containers had silicone sleeves covering the sides and bottoms. We noticed the silicone sleeves made the containers less slippery when stacking and moving them. They didn't leak at all, but there were some flaws. The removable gaskets were hard to wedge back into the very narrow channels in the lids; they also retained odors and stains. To clean the containers, the sleeves needed to be removed, cleaned, and dried completely, creating extra work.
PYREX FreshLock 14-piece Glass Storage Set MODEL: 1149252 PRICE: \$42.99 CONTAINS: One 6-cup, two 4-cup, four 1-cup containers SHAPE: Rectangular, round, and square MATERIAL: Soda-lime glass containers, plastic lids, silicone gaskets OVENSAFE TO: not recommended for use in the oven PERFORMANCE: ★★★ EASE OF USE: ★½ DURABILITY: ★★★ CLEANUP: ★½		This set included a mishmash of shapes. Though we first liked the variety of shapes, we soon realized it was a hassle to store them in three separate stacks and dedicate still more cabinet space for the lids. They aren't oven-safe. We found the narrow channel on the underside of the lid hard to clean. And, the gaskets retained odors. The latches were clunky and stiff, which prevented the containers from opening and closing smoothly, but they formed a leakproof seal.
NOT RECOMMENDED		
JOSEPH JOSEPH Nest Glass Storage MODEL: n/a PRICE: \$45.99 CONTAINS: One 10.5-cup, one 5.4-cup, one 2.7-cup, and one 0.55-cup container Shape: Rectangular Material: Borosilicate glass containers, plastic lids OVENSAFE TO: 536 degrees PERFORMANCE: ★ EASE OF USE: ★½ DURABILITY: ★★★ CLEANUP: ★★★		The lids on this rectangular 4-container set had no latches and no gasket; you just press them down to close. Unfortunately, water leaked when we shook them. The containers withstood high heat and stored fish without retaining odors. The lids had sloped edges that made stacking the containers precarious and limited how we could arrange them in the fridge or pantry.
WILLIAMS SONOMA Hold Everything Glass Food Storage Containers with Silicone Lids MODEL: n/a PRICE: \$99.95 CONTAINS: One 5.25-cup, four 3.5-cup, one 2.25-cup, one 1.25-cup containers SHAPE: Round and rectangular MATERIAL: Soda-lime glass containers, soda-lime glass lids, silicone gaskets OVEN SAFE TO: 570 degrees PERFORMANCE: ★½ EASE OF USE: ★ DURABILITY: 0 CLEANUP: ★★		We ordered this set three times, and every shipment arrived damaged. We never received a response after contacting customer service. The containers came in round and rectangular shapes, which required us to make two piles of containers for storage. The lids were made of glass, with a silicone gasket but no latches. The seal wasn't tight enough, and the containers leaked. The gaskets got stains that remained even after a few washes.

KEY GOOD ★★★ FAIR ★★ POOR ★