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CATALOG CRITIC**A Juiced-Up New Year**By **CHARLES PASSY**Special to **THE WALL STREET JOURNAL**

For New Year's, you're resolving to eat more fresh fruit and vegetables, but you're sick of dressing them up. So, you're ready to grind them down -- with a juicer.


Juicers have gone from being a niche item for the health-food crowd to a standard household appliance, thanks to an increased emphasis on proper diet and a wave of infomercials promoting "juicing for life." (And don't forget the latest raw-food craze.) And while nutritionists say you're better off eating whole fruit and vegetables for their added fiber, fresh juice still has plenty of nutrients and can taste better than supermarket juice. Little wonder the Association of Home Appliance Manufacturers reports that 15 million U.S. households have juicers, with shipments up 10% during the past year.

So we hopped on the juicing bandwagon and tested five models, ranging in price from less than \$100 to more than \$400. But the process turned out to be easier said than done. For starters, there's no such thing as a one-size-fits-all juicer: Different models have different strengths -- and work with varying efficiency, depending on whether you're juicing fruits or veggies. While we tried to find the most versatile, we had to contend with ones that left lots of pulpy mess or made about as much noise as a power saw. And so much for convenience: Most juicers require you to cut your produce before running it through -- sometimes into bite-size pieces.

Take the Omega 4000 Juicer, which we ordered for \$249 from the Living & Raw Foods Marketplace (aka DiscountJuicers.com). It's a centrifugal ejection-style model, which means the produce is shredded and then spun to separate the juice from the pulp that's "ejected" into a receptacle bin. A fine idea -- and it certainly made decent juice -- but we couldn't get around the fact the "feed chute" was barely wide enough for a quarter of an apple. That meant more time prepping and less time to enjoy our watermelon-carrot-beet juice. (Most juicers come with recipes suggesting such unusual combinations -- and we found them surprisingly tasty.)

In the case of another centrifugal ejection machine -- the Juiceman II Elite, ordered directly from the manufacturer, Salton, for \$100 -- the chute was plenty wide. But the juicer was unmercifully loud. And at a couple of points, we noticed it vibrated so much that a splash guard got shaken loose and ended up in our carrot juice. How, um, appetizing. (A Salton representative said it hadn't heard that complaint before.)

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Of course, there are models that work on other principles. The Green Star Juicer Model GS-3000 (\$425, with bonus accessories) from BestJuicers.com does its thing by slowly -- and we mean slowly -- extracting the juice as the produce is pushed through a twin-gear mechanism. (Think an old-fashioned clothes wringer.)

Plenty of Muscle

The Green Star's advantages: It's quieter and yields more juice than other models, at least by our measurements. (Even if you weren't counting ounces, you could tell by the fact the discarded pulp is so dry.) Green Star boosters also say the juice retains more nutrients since it's not heated as much during processing, and Nancy DiMarco, a nationally recognized nutritionist we consulted, agreed that higher temperatures can pose a problem. The disadvantages? The machine can be time-consuming and the parts difficult to clean. Plus, you'll need plenty of muscle to push denser items through.



Squeeze plays: Juicers from 1. Cooking.com; 2. Juicers for Less; 3. Salton; 4. Living and Raw Foods Marketplace; and 5. BestJuicers.com.

Which isn't to say all the juicers left us feeling like switching to soda pop instead. The L'Equip Mini Pulp Ejector Juicer Model 110.5 from Juicers for Less worked on the same principle as our other centrifugal-ejection models, but was more practical -- and, at \$88, less expensive.

It handled a variety of items, from fibrous pineapples to leafy greens, without fuss or mess (and yes, the chute is wide enough). And it took up very little counter space. It gets our nod for Best Value.

And for Best Overall? We go with the \$180 Acme Supreme Juicerator from Cooking.com. This is a centrifugal model without the ejection feature; the pulp stays spinning in a "basket," not unlike your laundry in a washing machine, until you're ready to stop. Such a method seemingly translates into more juice for your money -- in terms of volume, the Acme was comparable to the Green Star. And because it comes with filters that go inside the basket -- the only model we tested with such a feature -- the result isn't only an effortless cleanup, but also a decidedly clearer juice.

True, losing some of the pulp means losing some of the nutritional value, Ms. DiMarco warns. But even

she conceded that if that's what it takes to get you on your way to those five daily servings, it's a good start.

[Cooking.com](#)¹

Acme Supreme Juicerator, \$179.95
800-663-8810

Quality: *Best Overall.* Sturdy, centrifugal-style juicer yielded almost clear, pulp-free juice. Easy to assemble, clean.

Shipping Cost/Time: Free shipping; ours was due within 10 business days and came on time.

Return Policy: "Unconditional guarantee"; return within 90 days. You pay shipping; contact site if order is wrong, damaged.

Phone/Web Experience: Efficient, with useful shipping info, consumer tips. It also sent an e-mail confirmation of our order.

Comments: Comes with start-up supply of filters; company also sells additional ones.

Juicers for Less

L'Equip Model 110.5 Pulp Ejector Juicer, \$88
888-392-9237

[juicersforless.com](#)²

Quality: *Best Value.* Fairly compact, dependable centrifugal model with wide feed chute, pulp ejector. Juiced numerous items easily.

Shipping Cost/Time: Free shipping. Our order was due within nine days and arrived on time.

Return Policy: Return, unused, within 14 days. Subject to 20% restocking fee; authorization also required. You pay shipping.

Phone/Web Experience: We had to enter our info more than once. (And site still contacted us the next day with a question.) Site e-mailed a confirmation.

Comments: Company sells a variety of juicers, including a larger version of this L'Equip model for \$154.

Salton

Juiceman II Elite, \$99
888-889-0899

[esalton.com](#)³

Quality: Centrifugal ejection model vibrated, and was too loud for us. ("You're going to use it while you're awake," a spokesman said.)

Shipping Cost/Time: Free shipping, within 10 business days. Ours arrived on time.

Return Policy: Return within 30 days; call for authorization. You pay shipping.

Phone/Web Experience: Fairly straightforward, but we had to register, a step we prefer skipping. We received an e-mail order confirmation.

Comments: You can't accuse the company of chauvinism. There's also a Juicelady line of juicers.

Living & Raw Foods Marketplace

Omega 4000 Juicer, \$249

discountjuicers.com⁴

Quality: Centrifugal ejection model was solid, came with 15-year guarantee. But we couldn't get around the fact the feed chute was so small.

Shipping Cost/Time: Free shipping. Our order was due within eight business days and arrived on time.

Return Policy: Return, new and unused, within 14 days; call for authorization. Returns subject to 20% restocking fee. You pay shipping.

Phone/Web Experience: A great resource, with articles on the pluses and minuses of several models. Site e-mailed an order confirmation.

Comments: If you're going to juice fruits and veggies with the skin on, site suggests you buy organic produce.

BestJuicers.com⁵

Green Star Juicer Package (Model GS-3000), \$424.95

800-679-4879

Quality: Twin-gear model is slow, not very easy to clean. But company says it yields more juice -- and better preserves the nutrients -- than rivals.

Shipping Cost/Time: Free shipping, 10 business days. Ours came on time, minus a couple accessories. (Site quickly sent them.)

Return Policy: Return within 14 days in "original" condition; e-mail for authorization. Returns subject to a 20% restocking fee. You pay shipping.

Phone/Web Experience: A solid site, with helpful consumer info about a variety of juicers it sells. We received an e-mail order confirmation.

Comments: Included a book and an attachment for juicing soft fruit. Product can also make pasta, breadsticks.

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