



INDEPENDENT

Being a writer, I'm in the lucky position, sometimes, of trying before I buy. Janie Turner, who distributes the German brand Thermomix in this country, brought one round for me to have a play with. Janie stumbled upon the machines in 2001 when she took her 14-year-old vacuum cleaner back to its maker, Vorwerk, for a service. "At reception I saw a photograph of this machine," she remembers. "I didn't know that the company made anything other than vacuums, so I asked what it was." Since the machine she owned was a workhorse, she decided to try the Thermomix.

And she was sold. She and her husband became the UK distributors of Thermomix, and 12 years on, she has a growing team of demonstrators and fans, several themed cookbooks and some big-name chefs who have put their names to the product (Alan Murchison of Michelin-starred L'Ortolan and La Bécasse has devised recipes; Heston Blumenthal has named it as one of his kitchen essentials).

She is – of course – a passionate advocate of the machine and a two-hour demonstration from her is a blur of amazing techniques and endless silky-smooth purées, light-as-a-feather foams and two different kinds of crème pâtissière. It is no surprise that Thermomix products are sold only by demonstration rather than via shops – because their performance belies their appearance.

After Janie had left, I fell into a frenzy of food prep. A luscious blueberry-and-mango sorbet in four minutes; vibrant green-pea purée for adding to a risotto in six minutes; and – best of all – uniformly smooth pasta dough that made delicious spaghetti after a few turns through my pasta roller (glad I didn't jettison that gadget).

Yes, it takes some getting used to – it has more function buttons than my car. And despite there being only a base, a jug, a two-part lid and a stirrer, they're all a bit fiddly. Without Janie's firm hand, I'm a bit anxious about sticking a plastic spatula into a machine with blades spinning at up to 10,000 rpm.

No wonder the chefs who use the Thermomix extol the virtues of its blending power. Sat Bains, whose two-Michelin-starred restaurant in Nottingham is known for the inventiveness of its cuisine, says: "I love them, great for blending and cooking, I've used one for 13 years! Serious piece of arsenal." Michael Wignall of the Michelin-starred Michael Wignall at The Latymer restaurant tells me: "I use Thermomix at home and we have two at work. We use them for making the smoothest white polenta ever!"

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thermomix