Apple Unveils Latest iPads

Apple

Apple [1] (San Francisco, CA) is expected to round out its line-up of gadgets for the holiday shopping season with the Tuesday unveiling of its latest iPads.

The San Francisco showcase is likely to feature remodeled versions of Apple's standard-sized iPad with a 10-inch display screen and the iPad Mini with a nearly 8-inch screen. Hewing to its usually tight-lipped ways, Apple hasn't shared details about what's on the agenda. The Cupertino, California company merely sent out invitations that said, "We still have a lot to cover."

Apple's secrecy notwithstanding, glimpses of the revamped iPads have been showing up in videos posted on the Internet, including on websites that provided early — and accurate — peeks at the new iPhones Apple rolled out last month.

It will be a shock if Apple isn't taking the wraps off new iPads on Tuesday because it has been nearly a year since the previous generation came out. This would be the fifth generation of Apple's tablet computer. The original iPad debuted in early 2010 and accelerated the consumer shift away from traditional laptop and desktop computers. Tablets, including rival devices inspired by the iPad, are now outselling laptops.

If the unauthorized previews of the new iPads are correct, this year's standard-sized model is getting a more noticeable makeover than last year. It's expected to be even thinner and lighter than its predecessor and designed more like the iPad Mini with slimmer sides and tighter curves on the back. To conform with the new look, Apple is also expected to introduce new versions of its smart covers — the polyurethane shields that attach to iPads to protect the screen. The covers also can be detached and folded into a stand for the device.

Apple will probably add its high-definition "Retina Display" to the iPad Mini to stay competitive with recent upgrades to the smaller tablets sold by Google Inc. and Amazon.com Inc.

Both sizes of iPad almost certainly will come with iOS 7, Apple's latest mobile operating system, already installed. The new operating software has been available to download on most of the previous generations of the iPad since last month. Some iPad owners have complained that iOS 7 doesn't look as good or run as well on older tablets.

The new iPads may also come equipped with a biometric sensor that enables a user's fingerprints to serve as a password instead of typing a numeric code to unlock the device. The fingerprint technology is part of the iPhone 5S, Apple's latest high-end smartphone.

If Apple is consistent with its past practices, the prices on the new iPads won't change. Prices on the standard-sized iPad usually start at $499 and the cheapest iPad Mini goes for $329. That has left Apple's tablets more expensive than rival models, but the company has maintained the iPad is worth it.

The higher prices nevertheless have eroded the iPad's market share. The research firm Gartner Inc. estimates that tablet's running Google's Android operating system will end this year with a 50 percent share of the worldwide market versus 49 percent for the iPad. Just two years ago, the iPad commanded a 65 percent market share compared to 30 percent for Android tablets, according to Gartner.

The introduction of a new iPad could also herald the end of the line for the iPad 2, a tablet that Apple released more than two years ago. The iPad 2 currently serves as Apple's discount tablet with a $399 price tag.

It's also likely Apple will use Tuesday's event to announce the release dates for the polished version of its Mavericks operating system for Mac computers and a new Mac computer. Both the operating system and a desktop computer called the Pro were previewed at an Apple conference in June. New MacBook laptops are also possible Tuesday.
For more information, please visit www.apple.com [1]

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