

# How to Choose the Right Appliances for Your Home

By Dave Hoffman

So you've finally moved into your new home and now it's time to live there. The tools of daily living that help you with your cooking and cleaning are your appliances. When you are choosing your own appliances you have the chance to personalize their functions. Here are some of the things you can consider when trying to choose your own appliances.

For all appliances energy efficiency is a consideration that will save you money in the long term. Look for products that are labeled with the US government's Energy Star rating system indicating a high level of energy efficiency.

## **Dishwasher.**

Not only can dishwashers save you time they are also more efficient in their use of hot water than hand washing. When selecting a dishwasher you might want to take along some of your dishes to make sure they fit. Dishwashers can be either freestanding and portable or built in. While freestanding dishwashers may be more expensive they are useful for people who have small kitchens or who rent their homes. Dishwashers are 18 or 24 inches wide and have one or two washing racks although the layout of the racks can differ. Dishwashers also vary in the number of cycles available and some offer a water saving cycle. Depending on the dishes you are going to wash you may want to use different cycles. Some dishwashers have a water heating function. This is important because most hot water heaters are set around 110-120 degrees and it is recommended that dishes are washed at least 140 degrees.

## **Washer and Dryer.**

Clothes washers come with a few different options. Top load washers are less expensive than front load machines which can cost 30 to 40 percent more. However, top load washers are less energy efficient. Front load washers use less water and can be stacked. A dryer can go on top of the unit saving floor space. Washers also have different cycle choices including options for extra soak or rinse cycles. Choose a machine that has the options that best fits the clothes you will be washing.

Some washing machines regulate temperature by using a preset mixture of hot and cold water. You can opt for a temperature regulator which will make sure that the temperature of the water in

the machine is actually what it needs to be and make adjustments. Different detergents and fabric softeners work best at different temperatures so if you have a favorite detergent make sure your machine can adjust.

Dryers have less functional variability. Most have moisture sensors which trigger the machine to turn off when the clothes are dry and higher end models tend to have more options for choosing temperature. Gas dryers heat quicker than electric dryers and may be less expensive to operate.

### **Refrigerator/Freezer.**

There are a number of different configurations of freezer/refrigerator units; bottom-mount, where the refrigerator is on top of the freezer; top mount, where the freezer is on top; side by side, where each unit is top to floor; and compact, such as you might find in a dorm room or family room. Since cold air floats downward refrigerators with freezer units on top use 10 to 15 percent less energy than side by side units.

The size of the unit may be your biggest consideration. Things to consider are your family size. A larger family needs a larger unit. How much food you store at a time is also a consideration. If you shop often you may not need as large a refrigerator. Also remember a larger unit will use more energy. A unit that is too small may waste time with more frequent trips to the store and in constantly rearranging items so they will fit.

### **Range/Oven.**

Ovens can be both freestanding or built in as well. Factors to consider are the baking process as well as the cleaning process. Some ovens are self cleaning saving time and money. Ovens and ranges can cook with either gas or electricity. Gas stoves require that your house has access to natural or propane gas. A convection oven has a heating coil that works together with a fan to circulate the heat more evenly. These can cook up to 30 percent faster.

With any appliance purchase look into the warranty options to protect yourself against any unexpected problems. Most come with a warranty and also an optional extended warranty plan.