

How To Select Major Appliances for Your Kitchen

By Joe Talent

Just like shopping for any major purchase for your home choosing major kitchen appliances can be fun, but homeowners should think of family and lifestyle first. It will influence the shape and design of the rest of the kitchen.

Dishwashers have changed over the years going from the loud eyesores to models that blend into your kitchen and are so quiet it is difficult to tell if they are on. You can find models that feature concealed control panels built into the top of the door and stylized paneling that keep this appliance from standing out. Quieter motors and stainless-steel interiors help deaden dishwasher noise.

Many new homes are built for 2 dishwashers. For larger families or homes that like to entertain, one dishwasher can be cleaning while the other is being filled with new dirty dishes.

Homeowners interested in cutting-edge technology should be on the lookout for energy-efficiency, shorter cycles, and advanced features designed to cut time and fuss over dishes. Some models offer 3 tiers with adjustable racks and a washing arm under each rack allowing more dishes to be washed at one time.

Despite the many changes in dishwashers most American made under the counter dishwasher models are a standard 24 inches in width so selecting a new unit to replace an old one may not require space reconfiguration.

Cooktops, formerly known as stoves, are now fully independent from ovens, which brings more features and flexibility to both. Commercial cooktops are becoming more popular in residential kitchens because they truly cater to the gourmet chef. High-end gas cooktops feature low level BTU output settings which provide maximum control for precise cooking. Look for burners with an inner and an outer flame for high-precision and consistent heating.

Electric residential cooktops may be less expensive, but will not have the same precision as gas models. Cooktops range in size from 30 to 38 inches wide, but may be as wide as 48 inches if a griddle or grill is included.

Ovens come in two types; convection and conventional. Convection ovens are more expensive, as they feature blowers that circulate the heat for faster, even cooking. As with dishwashers, many new homes are being built with two ovens in mind. Two ovens allow for greater cooking capacity and flexibility.

Innovative appliances like convection microwaves offer new cooking options for the pressed-for-time homeowner. With roasting, baking, and crisping capabilities; convection microwaves combine all the reheat features of a microwave with the cooking options of a convection oven. Cooking time is cut in half, but the desired flavor and texture of the food remains.

Choosing a style of a refrigerator may be largely a matter of personal preference, but the size of the refrigerator should take into account the size of the family. A family of four may only a 17 to 25 cu. ft. unit, while one of six or more might want a 27 to 32 cu. ft. unit. Storage may be measured in cubic feet, but the width of the unit determines placement options. Let the needs of the family determine the size of the fridge, but be sure not to skimp. There's nothing worse than having a packed refrigerator that doesn't fit the family.

When considering additional features like ice makers or water dispensers, think about placement. Icemakers and water dispensers require a water line run to the refrigerator and can be messy over time. Weigh the feature against the benefits of adding these features.

Both height and width need to be taken into account when looking at refrigerator size.

Refrigerators can be as tall as 68 inches or more and as wide as 36 inches. A homeowner will want sufficient clearance from hallways, doorways and so on. A refrigerator that is going to be placed next to a wall will require a suitable door design. A standard rule of thumb is to allow at least 2 inches minimum on each side to allow a door to swing open, depending on the model.

Regardless of the type of major appliance you are purchasing always consider the functionality of units and how they fit your family's lifestyle.