

# How to Shop for A Kitchen Range

By Amanda Knoles

Before you shop for a new range measure the space in your kitchen and choose the oven size that best suits your family's needs. If you cook for two people you can probably get by with a two or three cubic foot oven. A small family of four should opt for a three to four cubic foot oven, and a family of five or more should select an oven that is four cubic feet or larger. Those who entertain or cook large meals frequently may want to buy a larger size.

Choose a range style carefully based on your kitchen's layout. Freestanding ranges have finished sides and controls on the backsplash. Slide-in ranges have a built-in look with controls on the front of the range. They are designed to fit adjacent to your countertop so measuring the space you have available is important. Drop-in ranges have unfinished sides and may require cabinet modification for a close fit. Slide-in and drop-in ranges are a good choice if you would like to place your range in an island.

Apartment sized ranges are generally 20 inches to 24 inches wide. Standard four burner ranges are 30 inches wide, and 36 and 40-inch ranges have five or six burners plus additional options such as grilles, griddles, and a large oven. Sixty-inch ranges may have six or eight burners plus grilles, griddles and other features including two or more ovens.

Gas ranges offer fuel efficiency and more control. They are available in open burner and sealed burner styles. Open burner styles feature large openings in the cook top to accommodate the burner. The cook top lifts up so that spills can be cleaned, and drip pans may be lifted off easily for cleaning. Sealed surface burner ranges have sealed burners recessed below the countertop surface. Since the burners are attached directly to the cook top, spills and splatters remain on the surface where they can be wiped off easily. An important advantage with a gas range is that you will still be able to cook during a power outage.

Electric ranges feature smooth top designs or coil elements that offer even heat distribution. Coil element ranges are designed with radiant elements that plug-in and can be removed for easier cleaning. They also come with drip pans that can be lifted out for cleaning.

Smooth top (radiant surface) ranges are designed with radiant elements that heat quickly on a smooth cook top. Some models feature adjustable elements that can accommodate either large or small cooking pots. Triple elements are designed to heat large griddle and casserole dishes. People who cook frequently like the durable ceramic smooth top because it is sealed to the range, preventing spills from dripping under the burner.

When you are selecting a new range, consider your style of cooking, the size of your family, the type of foods you like to cook, and the size of your kitchen. If you entertain often or enjoy experimenting with gourmet dishes, you will probably want to select a larger range with extra features. If you enjoy baking a lot and you frequently want to bake while you are roasting something at the same time, it would be smart to have two ovens in your kitchen. Several manufacturers now offer dual fuel ovens that are gas-fired with electric fans to circulate the air. If you frequently use very large pans, look for a range that features continuous grates, large burners, or combinable burners. It's best to choose a range that is versatile enough to allow you to use a variety of different sized pans at the same time.

Ranges today have more special features than ever. Some let you program the oven to start and stop cooking using a timer in your absence. Others offer refrigeration to keep foods cool and a programmable timer to heat the food at a specified time. Many newer models also feature electronic clocks and gauges that are easier to read to help you better monitor temperatures.

Some new ranges offer convection ovens that cook foods more evenly in a shorter period of time. A convection oven lets you choose between conventional baking and roasting or convection baking and roasting. The advantage of a convection oven is that meats cook up to 30 percent faster. Other features you can choose from include dual-fuel ranges, touch-pad controls, self-cleaning ovens and true simmer burners.

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