

WHAT'S NEW, WHAT'S HOT IN COOKING APPLIANCES

By Carol Lamkins, CMKBD, CID

Studies of average-size households have revealed that 75 percent of cooking is on the top of the range or cooktop and 25 percent is in the oven.* Today's range is available in dual fuel with a gas cooktop and an electric oven(s) for optimal cooking. The focus is on energy efficiency, ease-of-maintenance and choices of features. Homeowners want features with real and usable benefits.

Following is a list of oven features that address convenient cooking, superior results, worry-free baking/roasting and easy cleanup:

- **Multiple Cooking Modes.** Options include Bake, Broil, Convection Bake, Convection Roast, Convection Broil, Keep Warm and Slow Cook
- **Hidden Bake Element.** Spillovers become easy to cleanup with a solid oven floor covering the ribbon radiant element or calrod element.
- **Glass-Covered Broiler Element.** Streamline clean-up with a cover over the infrared or a six to eight loop calrod element.
- **Convection Electrical Element.** By surrounding the convection fan, hot air around food is distributed evenly for even cooking results.
- **Full-Extension Sliding Shelves.** Heavy pans and food are easily removed with oven racks on ball bearings extending past the oven cell.
- **Temperature Probes.** A replacement for old-fashioned meat thermometers for precise roasting results.
- **Porcelain Rack Guides or Shelves.** These resist pitting and do not need to be removed in self-clean mode.
- **Better Lighting.** Halogen or LED lighting devices and larger door windows result in better visibility.
- **Precise Temperature Control.**



Fisher & Paykel Telescoping Sliding Shelves



Sharp Super Steam Oven

Advanced technology and digital readouts provide the ability to better control temperatures at lower levels. The addition of convection fans to the preheat mode eliminates preheating the oven.

- **Porcelain Interiors.** High-quality blue porcelain interiors prevent food from sticking, as well as enhance aesthetics.
- **Steam-Assist.** Units with this feature provide a hotter cavity, and allow moisture to help refresh leftovers and breads to be crustier.

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- **Combination Steam-Assist, Convection Baking Oven and Microwave.** Some models include up to 43 automatic settings.
- **Touch-Screen Control Panels.** Some control panels can be hidden when not in use. These touch screens can store up to 220 recipes to be retrieved at one's fingertips. A help button on several ovens provides tips to users. Some controls are available with a choice of language and control color variations.
- **Framed and unframed door styles.** Unframed door styles allow the front of the oven to be installed closer to sounding cabinetry for a more integrated look.



Fisher & Paykel Touch Control Panel

There are many specialty ovens available in today's market. Microwave ovens have been available for several decades and are priced as low as \$100. However, an entirely new category combines a basic microwave with convection/ thermal capabilities or steam.



Sharp Cooktop with Microwave Oven Drawer

- **Microwave oven drawers.** These can install separately or be integrated below a cooktop.
 - **Speed ovens.** High-speed air cooking is combined with a microwave and warming drawer all in one large chassis.
 - **Warming drawers.** Low temperature ovens are considered keep-warm ovens and allow more moisture to be kept in prepared food. Many models are good for warming plates and some models are good for warming wash cloths for sticky hands.
- **Side-hinged or French door ovens.** This ergonomic option provides safe convenience for all ages. The range or oven can house multiple individual oven cells in one unit and can cook at different temperatures.



American Range French Door Oven

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Cooktops have come a long way in energy efficiency, appearance, safety and cooking power. Whether they are part of the range or built-in to the countertop, as with ovens, consumers want safety, energy efficiency, convenience, ease-of-maintenance and choices of features.

Stainless steel surfaces, polished or brushed, reflect a professional look and along with black are the most popular. White continues to fade further out of popularity. There are many unique color options coming into the market in shades of blues, reds, greens, and more. These will come to the forefront as more kitchen appliances “suites” become available. Other interesting finishes such as oiled bronze, and black and white floating glass have also entered the market.

Safety lock-outs for children are available in both gas and electric cooktops. Integrated ventilation systems provide options to updraft hood ventilation for islands, peninsulas, etc., where hood ventilation is not feasible or desirable.

Here are some features offered in gas cooking surfaces:

- **High output BTUs** on some or all burners up to 30,000 BTUs
- **Extra low simmer settings** for slow cooking
- **Hot plates** for keeping food warm
- Varying heat output and element shapes such as **coil, double back or star patterns** provide options for pot and pan sizes
- **Sealed gas burners** for easy clean-up with easy-access porcelain bases
- **Continuous burner grates** for safely shifting large pots and skillets
- **Redundant cueing** for controls with tactile or visual identification using shape, color or illumination
- **Balanced ignition systems** with each burner having individual igniters
- **Automatic re-ignition** for safety, should the flame on the burner blow out



Le Cornue range with hot plate

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Electric cooking surfaces are not as popular in a gas marketplace but still offer innovative features for the homeowner:

- **Induction cooking** with magnetic fields
- **Induction hybrid** using a combination of induction and electric elements
- **Infinite cooking temperature control**
- **Under glass electric burners** for easy clean-up
- **Even heat generation and control**
- **Electronic “touch panel” controls** for ease of setting temperatures



Electrolux Induction Hybrid Cooktop

Popular accessories for cooking surfaces and ovens are:

- **Wok burners** for high temperature burners
- **Deep fryers** for crisp cooking using baskets to raise food clear of the oil when cooking is finished
- **Griddles** with easy-to-clean flat plates of metal
- **Grills** for bringing traditional outdoor cooking into the kitchen
- **Oven rotisserie** for preparing healthy foods with minimal residual fats
- **Baking stones** for even contact heat and to help prevent foods from burning in ovens
- **Versatile broiler pans** such as those that convert from grill to “V” rack for both baking and broiling functions



Le Cornue Rotisserie

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Looking forward, homeowners will continue to expect more from their cooking appliances - more efficiency, performance, innovation, style and greater value. At the same time, manufacturers will continue to design appliances that meet and exceed the expectations of those who are passionate about cooking at home.

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