

Buyer's Guide

Natural Gas Ranges and Ovens



Serious chefs prefer natural gas cooking for its even heat, excellent temperature control and instant on and off. Today's natural gas ranges, ovens, cooktops and grills feature high-efficiency, easy cleaning and the reliability that natural gas equipment is known for. And they come in a wide range of sizes and configurations to meet the needs of every family. This publication will help you choose the equipment and features that are right for your home and your budget.

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Introduction

Cooking with natural gas is economical -- it costs about half as much to cook with a gas range compared with a similar electric range. A natural gas range may cost a little more to buy than an electric range, but will pay you back with energy savings and years of reliable service.

Many of the new models of natural gas cooking equipment use an electronic or spark ignition, rather than a continuously burning pilot light. This saves as much as 30 percent on energy costs, compared with models that don't have this feature. This also helps keep your kitchen cooler in warm weather. And, unlike electric ranges, gas ranges work well with pots and pans that are no longer perfectly flat on the bottom.

Natural gas cooking equipment comes in many sizes and shapes. Most familiar is the traditional free-standing range, which includes a cooktop and an oven. Also available are built-in ranges, which either slide or drop into a space between cabinets. The drop-in style sits on a low cabinet base and doesn't have a lower storage drawer, like free-standing or slide-in ranges do.

In some kitchens today, the cooktop and the oven or ovens are separated. This means greater flexibility for installation and greater flexibility and convenience for a two-cook kitchen. You could also add an indoor gas grill, either as part of the range or as a free-standing unit.

Commercial-style ranges are now available for home installation. They have chrome or stainless steel finishes, and multiple burners and ovens. These ranges are built especially for homes, with extra safety measures and insulation added. Real commercial ranges, which have a very high heat output, are not recommended for residential kitchens.

Although an exhaust system for natural gas ranges, cooktops and ovens is not required, it's a good idea to include an exhaust fan in your installation to eliminate the normal byproducts of cooking such as steam, smoke, grease and heat. Indoor gas grills should definitely have an exhaust system.

For any cooking equipment, you can use a traditional overhead exhaust fan that runs through a wall or ceiling, or you can consider a model that uses "downdraft" exhausting. This system uses a fan to pull cooking byproducts down from the cooking surface to the outdoors. Downdraft exhausting is appropriate for equipment installed in an island, if you don't want a traditional oven exhaust hood in the center of the room.

Steps for Selecting A Natural Gas Range

1. Think about how you use the kitchen. What kind of food does your family eat and how is it prepared? Do you need two ovens or one oven and a microwave? Does more than one person use the range or oven at the same time? Do you entertain often? The answers to these questions will help you decide what combination of equipment is best for you.
2. Decide where the cooking equipment will go and what size it should be. The description of sizes below will help you decide.

A natural gas range may cost a little more to buy than an electric range, but will pay you back with energy savings and years of reliable service.

3. Check out the list of special features below and decide which ones you are interested in. Most will add a little extra to the cost of the equipment.

4. Determine how easy it will be to clean each model and whether you want to spend a little more money to get an oven that cleans itself or has sealed burners on the cooktop, which makes clean-up much easier.

5. Try out the controls on each model you are considering. Are they easy to reach and use? Are they easy to keep clean? Are they easily understood? Controls should be arranged logically so it is simple to tell which control operates which burner. Electronic controls are popular today because they are easier to clean and to set than dial controls.

6. Compare warranties and service agreements for the products you are considering.

7. Be sure that the models that you are considering are design-certified by a nationally recognized laboratory that tests to national standards for cooking equipment.

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Sizes

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Most free-standing ranges are 30 inches wide, but models in 20-inch, 24-inch, 36-inch and 40-inch widths are available. Drop-in or slide-in ranges are usually 30 inches wide, but may be available in other widths. Cooktops come in 30-inch and 36-inch widths, while wall ovens are 24-, 27- or 30-inches wide. The height of a wall oven depends on whether the unit is a single or double oven.

Commercial-style ranges are available in widths from 30 to 60 inches, with varying heights.

Some ranges have a second oven or a microwave above the cooktop and need more vertical space for installation.

Be sure to consider the placement of the exhaust system for the cooking equipment.

If you are buying a new home, make sure the builder has a gas line available for the range. You also may want to upgrade from the model that the builder regularly installs to get some of the special features you would enjoy.

Special Features

Cooktops

Gas cooktops are made of stainless steel, steel coated with porcelain or glass. Modular cooktops may have a unit that allows you to pop in a grill, a rotisserie or a wok. Standard models have four burners, but other models have two, five or six burners. Some have a grill or griddle unit in the center or on either side of the burners. Others have a griddle or grill that can sit over regular burners.

Sealed burners are popular because they are much easier to clean than open burners. Many cooktops with sealed burners offer a range of burner sizes. For example, one model has a large burner for fast heating, two medium burners and a smaller one for simmering.

Other gas ranges are available with removable burner units for easy cleaning, with burner grates that can be cleaned in a dishwasher.

Standard, unsealed burners produce about 9,000 Btu per hour. (A Btu or British thermal unit is a standard measure of heat or energy output.) Sealed burners range from as much as 12,500 Btu per hour to a small 5,000-Btu-per-hour burner used for simmering.

Commercial-style ranges have burners that produce much more heat -- as much as 16,000 Btu per hour.

Look for features that make clean-up easier on a cooktop, including: removable control knobs; porcelain drip pans under the burners; a glass or porcelain backguard (rather than a painted one); a raised edge around the cooktop to keep spills under control; and corners and edges without seams. On cooktops without sealed burners, look for deep wells to contain spills and a top that opens up for cleaning, with two support rods to hold it in place. This frees up both hands for cleaning.

Another feature you might consider are heavy-duty burner grates that can support heavy pots. A porcelain coating on both the top and the bottom makes them scratch- and rust-resistant.

Ovens and Broilers

The most important factor in choosing an oven is deciding what type of cleaning method you want. Options include standard cleaning, continuous-cleaning and self-cleaning models.

A self-cleaning oven has a high-heat cycle, with temperatures as high as 1,000 degrees. The heat turns oven soil into a gray powdery ash that can be wiped up with a damp sponge. When the cleaning cycle is in use, the oven is locked. Self-cleaning ovens have a special porcelain enamel on the inside and a special door seal to stand up to the high temperature.

Continuous-cleaning ovens have walls that have been treated with a catalyst that oxidizes oven soil while the oven operates at normal temperatures. This system does not clean as completely as a self-cleaning oven, but eliminating the high heat cycle reduces its purchase price.

Standard cleaning ovens must be cleaned by hand, using soap and water or a commercial oven-cleaning product. Some models have a removable oven bottom or a removable door to make cleaning easier.

Some natural gas ovens are now available with convection heating. These units use a small fan to blow the hot air around the oven to speed up baking. Convection ovens are more expensive than traditional ovens.

Another feature to consider is the location of the broiler. In standard natural gas ovens, the broiler is in a drawer below the oven. In self-cleaning ovens, it's at the top of the oven, where it's easier to reach.

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The capacity of the oven is another decision. Models with the same outside measurements may have varying amounts of space inside. Consider how your family uses the oven to determine how much capacity you need.

You should also try out the door to see if it opens and closes smoothly without slamming. And be sure that the oven racks provide enough support for heavy roasts and turkeys.

Other features to consider when buying a range, cooktop or oven:

- Interior and exterior lights
- Electronic clock and controls
- Storage compartments
- Programmable ovens
- Colored cooktop burners
- Automatic meat thermometers
- Oven windows
- A sturdy frame with four leveling legs
- Rust-resistant hardware

Warranties, Service And Financing

Be sure to compare warranties and service arrangements. Find out how long the warranty will be in effect. Certain parts of the range may be covered for an extended time. You should also find out if the warranty covers your range if it is moved to another location before the warranty has expired.

Ask about installation costs, service calls and any special maintenance contracts that may be offered. The dealer's service capability can be very important.

Installation

Look at the reputation of the appliance dealer and the brand, and choose a capable and experienced installer. He or she will assemble and level your range. Proper leveling is important to get even heat in the oven. Your installer should also be up-to-date on local building codes and venting requirements.

Use and Maintenance

Your natural gas range will last longer and operate more efficiently if you take good care of it. Have repairs made when needed, and keep it clean. Read, save and follow the manufacturer's instructions. With all natural gas ranges, follow these safety tips:

- Never use your range or oven for heating a room.
- Don't store flammable items on or near your range.
- Use potholders rather than dish towels for hot pots and pans. Dish towels or other substitutes can catch fire or get tangled.
- In case of fire, turn off the burner, oven or broiler. Use a dry powder fire extinguisher or sprinkle the area with baking soda. Do not use water on a grease fire.

- If you smell gas, be sure all your range controls are turned off. If they are all off and you still smell gas near the equipment, leave the house and call your local gas utility from another location.

Cooktops

- After the burner lights, adjust the flame size so that it touches the pan about one-half inch from the outer edge.
- Choose the appropriate flame for the pan and the food you are cooking. If the flame curls up the sides of the pan, you are wasting energy.
- Lower the flame for non-aluminum pans so they heat evenly.
- If the holes in your burner get clogged, clean them with a fine wire, paper clip or pipe cleaner. Don't use a toothpick or anything else that could get stuck and burn.
- Keep pan handles turned in so you don't knock pans off the cooktop.

Oven and Broiler

- Leave at least an inch of space between pans and oven walls. If you are using more than one pan, don't place them directly above or below each other.
- Don't place pans directly on the oven bottom.
- If the oven is not continuous-cleaning or self-cleaning, wipe it with a damp sudsy cloth and rinse it thoroughly after every use.
- Clean the seal around the oven door periodically, and check for worn gaskets that might let heat escape.
- Take advantage of heat remaining in the oven by turning on a self-cleaning system immediately after the oven has been used for cooking.
- Do not cover the oven bottom with aluminum foil. This could interfere with heat and air circulation. To protect the oven bottom from spills, place aluminum foil or a cookie sheet on the oven rack below the one you are using. Don't cover the entire rack, because this will interfere with air flow. Always leave at least one inch of space between pans and any oven surface for good circulation.
- Never cover the top of a broiler pan with foil. Grease trapped by the foil cannot cool and could catch fire. Cover the bottom of the pan with foil and let grease drain to the bottom through the top grid.
- To make the broiler pan easier to clean, remove it when broiling is finished and dispose of any grease that has collected. Sprinkle the pan and grid with soap or detergent; cover them with wet paper towels and let them soak. When they cool off, wash them in the usual way.

**Manufacturers of Natural Gas Ranges, Cooktops and Ovens
and their web site addresses, if available.**

AGA Cookers	www.aga.com
Amana	www.amana.com
Caloric	
Modern Maid	
Bosch	www.boschappliances.com
Brown	
Companion	
Dacor	www.dacorappl.com
Dynamic Cooking Systems	
Dynasty Range	www.dynastyrange.com
Jade Range	
Elmira Stove Works	www.elmirastoveworks.com
Estate	
Frigidaire	www.frigidaire.com
Gibson	
Kelvinator	
Tappan	
White-Westinghouse	
Gaggenau	www.gaggenau.com
Garland	
GE	www.ge.com
GE Monogram	
GE Profile	
Hotpoint	
Heartland	
Kenmore (Sears)	www.sears.com/prod/apps/index.htm
Maytag	www.maytag.com
Admiral	
Jenn-Air	
Magic Chef	
Miele	www.miele.de/E/VG_USA.html
Peerless-Premier	
Roper	www.roperappliances.com
Russell Range	
Thermador	www.thermador.com
Vandermolen	
Viking Range	www.vikingrange.com
Whirlpool	www.whirlpool.com
KitchenAid	
Wolf Range	www.wolfrange.com
FlashBake	