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### NF97-337 Making Decisions: Buying a Range

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## Making Decisions: Buying a Range

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Almost everyone who plans to buy a range has some experience in using one. This may make selection less difficult. People who regularly use a gas range may be more comfortable with a gas range. Electric-range users may feel the same about using an electric range. There are other considerations for range selection, however, such as:

### What style do you want?

- Built-ins feature a separate oven/broiler unit and cooktop. Both two- and four-surface unit models are available with either single or double built-in ovens.
- Drop-in models fit into a counter and are supported by either the adjacent counter or a platform built on the floor. Often, these units lack storage drawers.
- Eye-Level /Oven or Dual-Oven Ranges feature a lower oven, surface cooking, and an eye-level oven or microwave.
- Free-standing units are all in one and sit on the floor. Considered the basic, conventional range, these units generally offer the greatest variety of sizes and models. They can be easily moved if you change locations and are easy to install.
- Slide-ins are a variation of the freestanding range, but stand independently between two base cabinets. Slide-in ranges often have unfinished sides with optional end panels, if needed.

Before selecting a particular range style, consider comparable equipment, necessary cabinet work, wiring, installation, and household needs.

### What type of elements or burners do you want?

Most electric range tops have four surface units consisting of two sizes, 6- and 8-inch. The 6-inch units range from 1,200 to 1,900 watts. The 8-inch units range from 2,000 to 2,700 watts. You may choose from:

- Coil tubular elements are generally plug-in/plug-out and self-cleaning. These units reach extreme temperatures and stay hot for several minutes after the unit is turned off.
- Glass ceramic top ranges have heating elements that are hidden under a smooth glass top. These may be radiant or halogen induction elements. There are no crevices to collect dirt or grease, and spills can be readily wiped up. Some surfaces show smudges easily. These range tops require the use of flat-bottom utensils. The range top will heat and cool more slowly than a conventional range. They may also need special cleaning and care to avoid scratching or discoloration. Sugary spills must be cleaned up promptly.
- Quartz halogen heating elements are designed to heat up rapidly. Rapid heating response offers better cooking control with no preheating required. These also require flat-bottom cookware.
- Induction ranges are similar to glass ceramic top ranges, but the cooking principle is different. An induction range heats and cools quickly and provides more precise cooking temperatures. The surface of the induction range remains relatively cool; energy is transferred through the glass top to the utensils and food. They may be safer and easier to clean since spillovers do not bake on. Using an induction range requires cookware made of magnetic materials, such as iron or steel. An oscillating magnetic field in the range top induces a secondary current in the pan.

Gas burners usually have a grid to hold cookware. Spills can sometimes run under the burners. Burners that are sealed, with no area for spills to run below, or a rim around the edge to contain spills, are easier to clean. Look for an easy-to-clean grid and cooktop for a gas range.

Gas cooktops may be glass, porcelain-coated steel, or stainless steel. Gas models may use a spark or electric igniter and some reignite if the flame is blown out. Some have sealed burners to keep spills contained. Gas cooktops with sealed burners or conventional burners are easier to clean than older models.

Some cooktops have a limiter that cycles the burners on and off to prevent overheating. Some sense overheating and shut off that burner.

**What type of oven do you want?** People are most familiar with conventional or "regular" ovens that heat with an element at the bottom of the oven. A second element at the top of the oven may also supply some of the heat. A newer type of oven uses a fan to circulate heat. These ovens are called convection ovens. Convection ovens cook faster than conventional ovens, but may take a little time and practice to get accustomed to. Some cooking procedures may need changing. Convection ovens distribute the heat all around the product with a fan system. The oven capacity may be smaller.

**Do you want a self-cleaning oven?** This feature will cost more. Continuous-clean ovens (catalytic) are not the same as self-cleaning ovens. Continuous-clean ovens clean as they are used at normal temperatures. Certain abrasives or cleaners cannot be used on them. Additional occasional cleaning with a sponge and sudsy, hot water is needed. Self-cleaning ovens (pyrolytic) are set to clean at high temperatures and lock shut at a special cycle as they clean. They "burn" off deposits leaving a small amount of charred material or ash. They usually have extra insulation due to the high temperature for cleaning, which can save energy and operating costs.

**Are the controls easy to read and use?** Are markings clear and easy to read? Are they safe if there are children in your home? Would you use timed controls to start cooking so food is ready at mealtime? If you want this feature, ask the salesperson to demonstrate setting the timer control before you buy. Are controls made for universal design  easy for any age to use  even if the person has hand/arm or sight limitations? Heat surface signal lights help to indicate which unit is on or has been left on.

Thermostatically controlled units for range tops are more efficient as they cycle on and off for the heat needed.

**Are the surfaces easy to clean?** Can you remove controls or lift up elements for easier cleaning? Porcelain enamel and stainless steel are durable, but must be cleaned in different ways. Do you have to use a special cleaner for the range top, or for the oven or other parts?

**Will you need to buy new cookware?** Smooth-top and solid elements work inefficiently if pans are warped or have curved bottoms. Some surface units require specific materials.

**Can you tell if the burners remain hot?** Some ranges have signal devices to warn you when burners are hot. Some burners are designed to heat up and cool down quickly. You may want warning devices that tell you a surface is still hot.

**Do you need to add a heat and air exhaust system?** A system vented to the outside is more energy-efficient, removes moisture, heat, combustion products, and/or food pollutants and odors. Be sure to vent it to the outside — not into a wall only or into an attic. Consider the effect the vent and air draw has on your whole home air movement. Vents remove cooking odors, smoke, humidity and air-borne grease and other cooking pollutants.

Refer to a consumer magazine or book for comparison studies about ranges. Check with your library or local Cooperative Extension office.

### Range Machine Information

Electric _____   Gas _____   Microwave/conventional oven combination _____   Convection oven/microwave combination _____   Oven style _____			
Space for washing machine: Height _____ in.   Width _____ in.   Depth _____ in.			
	<b>Model 1</b>	<b>Model 2</b>	<b>Model 3</b>
Range make and model			
Retailer			
Measurements			
Capacity in cubic feet (height, width, depth; w/ lid opened/closed)			
Element or burner type wanted			
Oven type <input type="checkbox"/> conventional vs. convection? Microwave combination?			
Controls easy to see and use			
Controls are safe with children present			
Self-cleaning/continuous-cleaning			
Exhaust system/vent			

Other features I want (list here)			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Built-in, freestanding, drop-in, range and eye-level oven or slide in</li> <li>Grill or griddle</li> <li>Ability to use a canner or pressure cooker. Elements, space alongside and range hood must be large enough. Kettles too large for burners can cause hot temperatures and discoloration in the stovetop.</li> </ul>			
Other features in each model			
Conventional controls (push button or turn) or electronic panel controls. Thermostatically controlled units on rangetop			
Energy efficiency			
Delivery/removal cost			
Are service persons available in area to service product?			
Other			

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- *Making Decisions: Buying a Dishwasher*, NF97-333
- *Making Decisions: Buying a Microwave Oven*, NF97-334
- *Making Decisions: Buying Home Appliances*, NF97-335
- *Making Decisions: Buying a Refrigerator*, NF97-336
- *Making Decisions: Household Water Saving Equipment*, NF97-338
- *Making Decisions: EnergyGuides and Major Home Appliances*, NF97-345
- *Making Decisions: Buying a Washing Machine*, NF97-346
- *Making Decisions about Service Contracts and Appliances*, NF97-347
- *Making Decisions: Buying a Clothes Dryer*, NF97-348
- *Handling Wastes: Household Appliances (White Goods)*, NF94-189

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