

Stoves

Most stoves cost less than a separate cooktop and oven, and they take up less space. Select from freestanding, slide-in and drop-in models. They are typically 27 in. deep and 30 in. wide, but they also come in 36-, 24- and 21-in. widths. Finishes include stainless steel, ceramic-glass, and enameled cast iron or steel.

Tip from the Pros: Never install a stove below an operable window. A good breeze can blow out gas burners, causing the room to fill with fumes. The flow of air also cools electric burners, so they must work that much harder to maintain their temperature.

Choose gas or electric heat, or combine the two in one stove:

Electric stoves cost less to buy but more to operate than gas models. Choose between radiant and convection heat. In some models, you can shift between the two. Traditional metal coils remain the standard burner, but there's also cast-iron solid-disk and halogen burners, and smoothtops with radiant coils or magnetic induction burners.

Gas stoves offer more precise temperature control for fine-tuned cooking. And unlike electric burners, they don't usually need replacement. However, some people dislike the smell of gas and worry that it may contribute to indoor air pollution. Installation costs for new gas lines are higher than for electricity. To save money, choose the type of fuel that's already in place.

Restaurant-style commercial stoves and cooktops are fast, flexible and fun if you're into sauteing and other high-heat techniques. However, professional stoves are also more expensive, heavier and larger than consumer appliances. And they're harder to clean, use far more energy, and require large hoods and extra ventilation. Many professional-equipment manufacturers market modified cooktops and stoves for home use. And some residential-appliance manufacturers now make high-power, commercial-style units.