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# homeimprovement

Great ideas and resources for your home and garden

## the Loft Lifestyle

What draws so many to these urban homes

**Whole House Makeovers**  
3 Before & Afters

**Appliance Buying Guide**

**PLUS** 20 steps to a complete home inventory, growing 6 summer hydrangeas & the latest furniture trends from High Point



# Modern Day Appliances



Photo courtesy of Dacor.

**Sexy and sleek, today's appliances do more than just cook and clean.**

**by Sharise Cunningham**

**F**or decades the home has centered on the kitchen. Despite today's hectic family schedules, the kitchen is still the hub of the home, whether it's for casual family dinners or formal get-togethers.

Appliance manufacturers are keeping that trend in mind as they fashion major appliances (and small ones too) that fit any style of home and every need; from the "gotta-have-it-in-an-instant" soccer mom, to the dinner party diva—there's something fabulous cooking and it's not just in the kitchen. Major appli-

ances throughout the house are getting sleeker, slimmer and more sophisticated as appliance design and functions are adapting to the needs of today's multi-generation, multi-faceted families.

Product designers say consumers want appliances that save time, are convenient to use, provide easy clean up, are stylish, have multiple applications and help maintain a healthy environment.

Along with the changing needs of the family, the popularity of open floor plans has led kitchen and appliance designers to look for new ways to make appliances blend into the rooms



surrounding them. This is accomplished by the marriage of looks and more efficient and quiet design.

Andrea Erikson, general manager of Lake City Appliances, calls the continuing trend of hiding appliances behind cabinetry "kitchen furniture" because it creates a look that's so fully-integrated guests often have to hunt for the fridge or dishwasher.

### Cooking heats up

Most kitchen appliances come in either "professional" grade, offering a tradition-

al look and heavy-duty styling, or a style-conscious "designer" series for cleaner lines with a more integrated, built-in appearance.

Whether you want a freestanding range to take center stage, an oven at eye level for frequent baking, a cooktop centered in an island, a couple of well placed warming drawers or a built-in wok, there's a manufacturer whose got just what you need. But being pretty isn't always enough, master cooks also want performance.

"There is increasing demand for the



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Photo courtesy of Aga.



ultimate in product performance, and most recently that has meant BTU output,” says Michele Blaya, a spokesperson for DCS (Dynamic Cooking Systems), a leading manufacturer of high-end indoor and outdoor cooking equipment. Higher BTU output means you get safer and quicker boils, which ultimately leads to more efficient cooking.

### More colors

No longer a black, white or off-white choice, appliances are popping up in new materials and a rainbow of colors. “The addition of bold color can accentuate or accessorize a room’s decor to create interest and a focal point,” says Julia Uribe, strategic marketing director for Marvel, which specializes in under-counter refrigeration. Marvel’s under-counter wine cellars include sexy red or daring black interiors that, when coupled with a see-through glass door, create a dramatic statement in any room, inside or out. Marvel sells a variety of wine cellars with prices ranging between \$1,099 and \$2,399.

Aga Ranges offers an astounding array of 14 colors. The dual-fuel Six-Four (left) range is not only attractive with its European styling and bright colors, but it’s everything the consummate chef could want. This powerhouse of

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ranges includes six gas burners and four independently controlled electric ovens. Aga's innovation gives you the time, now all you need is the energy to cook a complete five-course meal all at once.

Vice President of Aga Sales and Marketing Andrea M. Moravsky, says their designs fit any decor "whether it is a subtle, elegant, traditional kitchen or a grandiose statement in an ultra contemporary environment." Aga's ranges are all handcrafted in England of cast iron and coated with three applications of vitreous enamel for a super high-gloss look. The Six-Four Series retails for just under \$7,000.

### New materials

Stainless steel continues to be popular but companies like BSH Home Appliances Corp., makers of the Bosch, Thermador and Gaggenau brands, are experimenting with new materials such as titanium and brushed aluminum, which "offer unique elegant looks while providing durability and solid performance," says Erika Young, marketing relations manager for BSH.

According to Young, even the most inexperienced cook can feel like a chef. "The function and styling of each (BSH) product are designed to give the home-based chef



Photo courtesy of Thermador.

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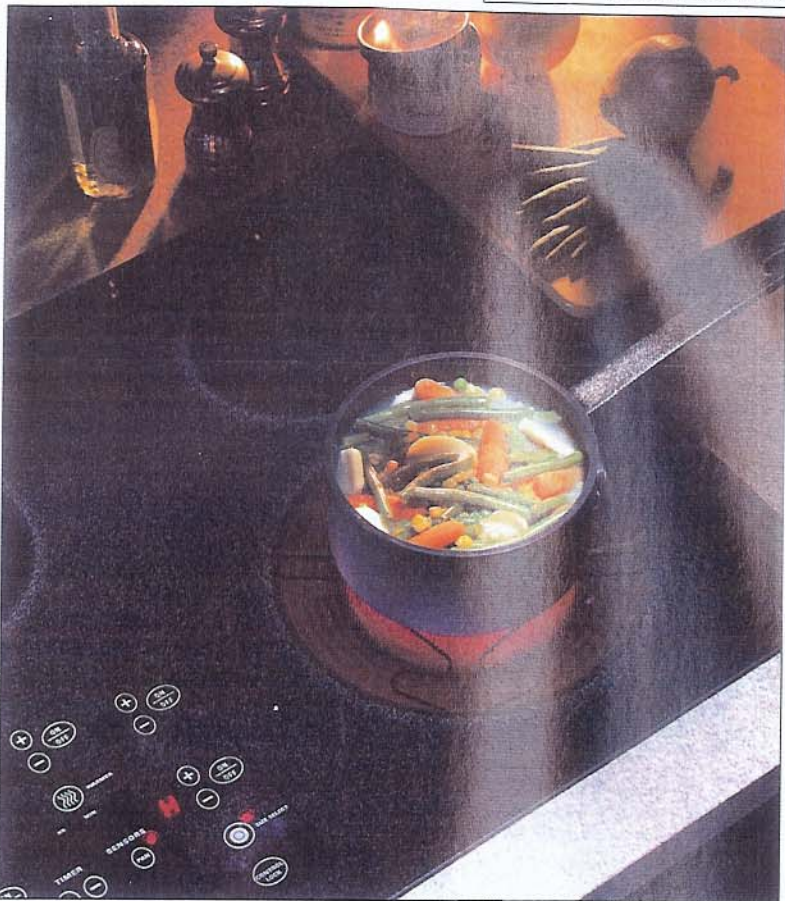
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cooking abilities they didn't know they had," she says. Two more distinct trends in cooking are the smooth-surface cooktop and a retro design that harkens back to grandma's kitchen. Electrolux and GE are two companies riding both of these waves. They both offer a completely smooth electric cooktop with glass ceramic surface (left) and six surface elements, two of which can be adjusted from 6 to 9 inches.

The "Classic Frigidaire" series of retro-design appliances debuted this spring. An entire stainless suite commemorating Frigidaire's 85th anniversary includes a top-freezer refrigerator, dishwasher, and gas or electric range for as low as \$1,600.

Brian Hendrick's company, Elmira Stove Works specializes in retro design. Their antique-styled appliances are based on a late 1800's design and have been used in the renovation and restoration of Victorian homes, 50's era homes, Manhattan apartments, beach houses, game rooms and other restoration projects. The retro product line includes all appliance types and modern conveniences like dual-fuel, pullout spill-proof shelves, and ice and water dispensers.

"Our appliances may look old-fashioned, but they are created with the latest technology and the features cooks

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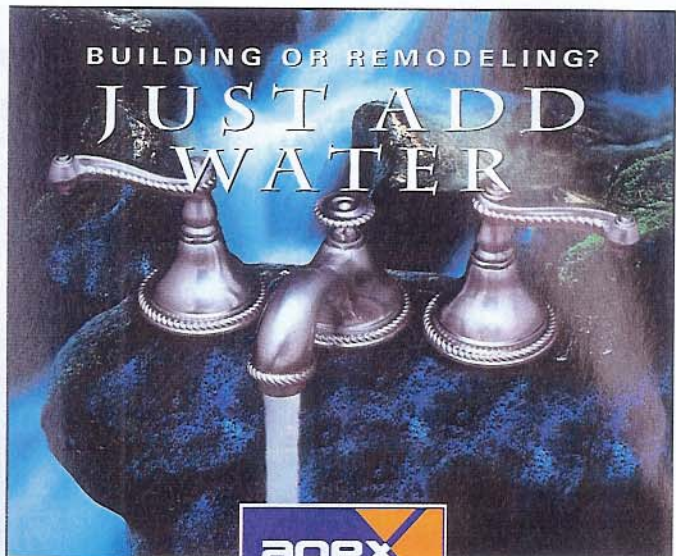


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are demanding, all in a package that is unique and energy efficient," Hendrick says. The Elmira line comes in basic black and off-white, plus cayenne (red), blue and green. The custom-built ranges start at \$3,600.

### Fresh ideas

Today's busy homes, especially those with children, need refrigerators that are convenient and easily accessible.

According to Maytag Appliances (makers of Jenn-Air and Amana) spokesperson, Maggie O'Brien, consumers access the fresh food area of the refrigerator up to 10 times more often than the rest of the compartments. "It just makes sense for the Amana Easy Reach Plus (right) to have a fresh food section at eye level—allowing easy access to the foods we use most often." Another benefit is that you're less likely to forget about items that get pushed to the back only to turn up months later as an unidentified fuzzy green mass. The Easy Reach Plus retails from \$1,399 to \$1,999, depending on selected features and finish.

Parents of smaller children might be able to take a break from demands for drinks and such with the Kid-Zone side-by-side that has an easy access area at the



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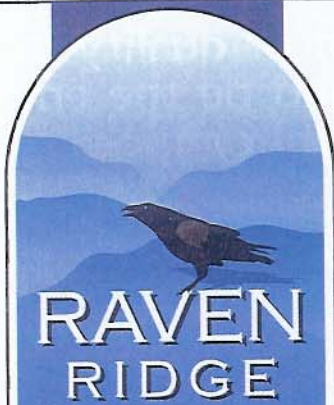
Photo courtesy of Samsung.



bottom of the fresh food section for juice boxes, pudding cups and other snacks. The plastic penguin character that designates this as kid territory can later be replaced with a temperature controlled beverage chiller. KidZone retails for around \$1,399.

For the more harried cook, microwave ovens continue to be a time saver. Fortunately, they are also riding the trend of design and function convergence. Samsung Electronics offers what they claim is the world's first 3-in-1 oven. The Toast & Bake Microwave Oven™ (left) combines a toaster, a 1,750-watt oven and a 1.0 cubic foot microwave all into one compact unit. The oven also features a ceramic enamel interior for easy cleaning, a pull-down door handle for oven-like access and two-level rack holders. It is currently available in four colors and retails for \$229.

Sharp Electronics' Corporation's over-the-counter microwaves could easily be mistaken for miniature regular ovens with their advanced controls and slim designs. Nancy Levene of Sharp Electronics wants consumers to know that they may be in for a surprise when shopping for a new microwave oven. She says consumers will find a wide range of convenience features that simply didn't exist the last time they



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bought a microwave, making it easier for everyone in the family to operate.

Though the colors have yet to become as daring as those seen in ranges, most microwave manufacturers do offer stainless steel in addition to black and white. "There are ovens for every size, style, cooking need and price range," Levene says.

### Kitchen clean up

So what about the appliances that have to do the kitchen's dirty work? Dishwashers are undergoing design makeovers to keep up with the rest of the kitchen. While they are increasing in load capacity and washing power, they are doing it more quietly.

Whirlpool, the world's largest manufacturer of dishwashers (right) has two new arrivals; the 900 series, which retails for \$459, uses the five-level AccuWash system that "guarantees to clean baked-on food." The 800 series with the standard three-level DuraWash costs just under \$300.

Like microwaves, colors other than the standard are still rare but they can be hidden behind cabinetry to complete the integrated look. Many of the same companies that make refrigerators, ovens and cooktops

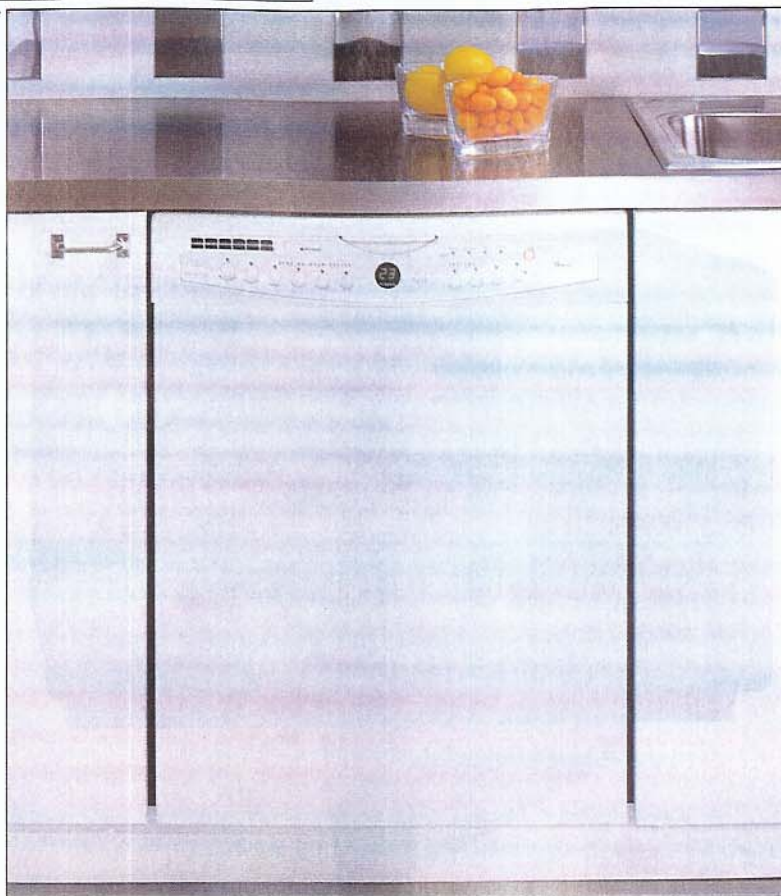


Photo courtesy of Whirlpool.

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Photo courtesy of Maytag.



also make dishwashers, compactors and disposals so you can easily create a fully coordinated kitchen.

### Clothes call

Next to the dishwasher, the washing machine and dryer are the two main appliances to be adapted for quiet operation. Laundry rooms aren't necessarily tucked away in garages anymore.

O'Brien says the laundry room continues to migrate from the isolated places into the living areas of American homes, whether it's for convenience or space, making product aesthetics increasingly important. "Consumers are demanding that laundry appliances be both visually appealing and quiet," she says.

Best known for its lonely repairman, not only does Maytag's Neptune washer (left) meet the new design standard, it has the four Cs of laundry care—cleaning, conservation, care and capacity wrapped up. They've recently added the fifth C; customization, which allows the user to create, name and store custom cycles. The washer ranges from \$1,139 to \$1,569 and the dryer from \$699 to \$969.

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### Get experience

Seasoned and new cooks alike can all discover their culinary talents in the latest trend used by manufacturers to attract new consumers—the cooking center. These model outlets combine the best of retail with the personal touch of a fully outfitted kitchen and other home appliances.

Centers such as those offered by Viking, Dacor and KitchenAid allow the consumer to become part of the shopping experience by engaging in cooking classes and actual hands-on use of ovens, ranges, kitchenware and even utensils. If they make it, it's most likely available for testing.

These centers allow you to experience the home environment of your dreams through low-cost, hands-on cooking instruction or by watching professional guest chefs from comfortable stadium seating. Atlanta residents can check out Whirlpool's Insuperience "consumer laboratory" where they can experience the brand in a no-sales-pressure live environment. Visitors can use real appliances to cook, bake, wash and launder.

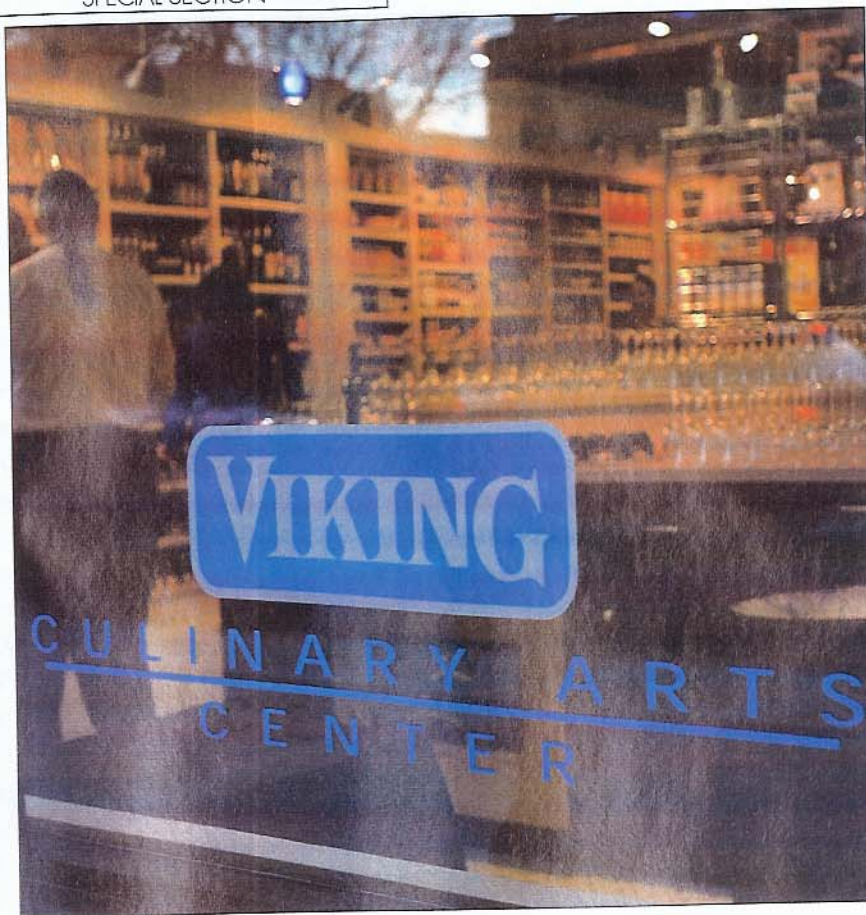


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**The extras**

Would you like a warm towel with your fries? While the outdoor kitchen is growing in popularity, it is still a unique addition. Outdoor ranges are available from Viking and other big makers but perhaps the most unique idea in multi-functionality comes from Dacor's marketing manager, Brent Spann.

The outdoor Epicure grill by Dacor features an electronic ignition that re-ignites at the exact level should it blow out. This feature alone is pretty convenient but Spann suggests you can use the warming ovens to keep dinner warm or even better—your beach towels. Just imagine a cool dip in the pool followed by a luxurious wrap in a warmed towel. That's living.

There are so many other appliances that make life easier or just more fun, including convection ovens; ventilation; slow cookers; air purifiers; central vacuum systems; humidifiers, and dehumidifiers; under-counter wine coolers (left); ice machines; beer dispensers and more.

It's obvious, no matter how you live, there's an appliance that will help you live better. Manufacturers know our changing needs and will continue to meet the challenge by focusing on integrating design with function. 

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