



BUILT IN OR FREE STANDING?

WHICH COOKING APPLIANCES TO CHOOSE.

For so many people making a choice about what appliances they want comes pretty far down the list when they start planning for a new kitchen. But why? Appliances are one of the more expensive items in your kitchen that have both an aesthetical and functional impact. Kitchen designers want to know what you are choosing, appliance wise, as this helps them with both their design and their plans for proper ventilation and manufacturing of the kitchen.

With the explosion of TV cooking shows, more focus has been placed on the cooking appliances. These not only have to be practical – catering to all your visions of being a Nigella or a Marco, but

they must also add an aesthetical element to the kitchen and hold their own as a feature. The big question then becomes, do you opt for freestanding or built-in?

The choice between built-in and freestanding is more difficult now than ever before because of the vast variety for you to choose from. Ultimately, in making the decision, you need to think of three things 1) your budget, 2) you, your family and how you like to cook, and 3) what look and feel are you trying to achieve in the kitchen.

YOUR BUDGET?

There are affordable options available in both freestanding and built-in, but the general thought is that you get more for your rand when you look at freestanding. This is primarily because of the development of the 90cm range cooker. If you like to cook, this option offers you a superb combination of 5-6 plates or gas burners and a large 90cm oven. However, you must give thought to the fact that you will use more electricity heating up the oven than you would with a 60cm unit. With built-in, you have to purchase and pay for two separate appliances, a hob and an oven, but with freestanding you get the two units in one and hence only paying for one.

Choosing built-in over freestanding also has budget implications for the kitchen. Built-in appliances need cupboards specifically built to house and ventilate them. The extra materials will push the manufacturing costs of the kitchen up. There will also be the added expense from your





work top fabricator as a cut out will have to be made in the work top to accommodate the hob.

You should also bear in mind that if you sell your home it is permissible for you to take your free-standing cooker with you while built-in cooking appliances are considered a fixture and must remain in the house.

One must also consider the installation costs. With built-in your electrician will charge you for connecting up two separate appliances. If you opt for a freestanding electric cooker you are only paying for the connection of one appliance. If you opt for a gas/electric combination the oven usually requires a 15amp plug, which you can do yourself, and the hob section would require a visit by a gas plumber.

YOU, YOUR FAMILY AND HOW YOU LIKE TO COOK?

The fact that a built in oven and hob can be split allowing you to place the oven eye level or under-counter, and the hob either near the oven or elsewhere like on an island unit ,means they offer you, as a cook, more flexibility and for the kitchen to be designed around how you like to work. Ergonomics will also be allowed to play a greater role in the design meaning the cooking experience should be more practical and less stressful. This is also an important consideration if you are tall or suffer from back problems. Freestanding units all have a low level oven which means a lot of bending and lifting of heavy roasting pans. With a built-in oven you can install it at any level meaning it becomes more accessible and more ergonomic.

Only the more expensive freestanding units offer you an option of two ovens. This can affect how you cook. If you are someone comfortable cooking on a large scale or doing multiple dishes

in one oven simultaneously, then this will not bother you; but if your cooking style requires more stringent control, the use of separate ovens may be better for you. Most built-in appliance ranges have multiple combinations available, allowing you to have two separate ovens, one of which could also be a steamer or a microwave.

WHAT LOOK AND FEEL ARE YOU TRYING TO ACHIEVE IN YOUR KITCHEN?

Freestanding cookers have definitely come into their own aesthetically over the past few years. They are now available in an amazing range of styles and colours and for a price you can have pretty much any look you want as long as you are happy to have an appliance that has a fairly dominant presence in the kitchen. These units are suited to people looking for either a very industrial look or a more vintage or retro look. Either way they will allow you to make your cooker a feature point in the kitchen and a real expression of your tastes.

Built-in is more subtle. On the whole most built-in ranges are designed to match, have clean lines, be fairly minimalist and offer a sleek cooking solution that can melt into the kitchen rather than being a main feature. If you are planning for your kitchen to be a place of clean lines, simple aesthetics and calm, then built-in is definitely for you. It is also a great design asset that most built-in appliance ranges will have a microwave, coffee machine or steamer to match the oven so that there can be consistency in look and feel. When combined with integrated washing and refrigeration the built-in look is at its best.

As you can see, there is more to consider when choosing your cooking appliances than first meets the eye. It is vitally important that you have done some research on this and have an idea as to which option and, if possible, brand and model you are leaning towards when you meet with your kitchen designer. Remember to ensure your designer is given, in writing, the name, model and installation specs of the appliances you have chosen so they can ensure the cabinetry is built correctly. All electrical and gas connections must be done by a qualified person or your insurance will not cover you in the event of a fire. Finally, ensure you chose a reputable brand that has full after sales service, a proper guarantee and spares.

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