



# Choosing the Right Appliances

**TIM,**  
*We are beginning the appliance selection process for our kitchen remodel earlier than normal due to the pandemic-related scarcity. What factors should we consider when selecting appliances?*

I find that homeowners prefer to take plenty of time researching their kitchen appliance selections, so it's never too early to begin the process. Additionally, many of them want some advice when making the final choices.

Once the process has begun, the sheer number of models to choose from can feel overwhelming. Appliance manufacturers

offer styles and features for every taste and lifestyle, and they update those models about as often as car makers do. So, narrowing the choices can be a challenge.

The choice of refrigerator, range or dishwasher will depend on personal taste and on how the homeowners intend to use the kitchen. They also want models that are well engineered, have solid warranties, look good with the cabinets and won't get outdated over time.

As part of their research, most homeowners like to factor in how their choices will affect the home's marketability should they decide to sell at some point. Entering "2021 Appliance Trends" into a search engine will return links to dozens of articles

and videos on the subject – this content is a great start, but much of it is driven by advertising. That's one reason the "top selling" models and the hottest trends vary from article to article.

One way to supplement the content served up by commercial publications and websites is to look at industry research. For instance, sales data from sources such as the Association of Home Appliance Manufacturers (AHAM) is a good reflection of homeowners' priorities.

According to the most recent data, the top priorities for buyers include time, convenience and status. Let's look at a few examples.

**Time.** Today's consumer can't get



enough of time-saving appliances. For instance, they have been flocking to induction cooktops, whose market share doubled in recent years. AHAM credits that gain to shorter cooking times and more precise temperature control.

**Convenience.** Sales trends show that, besides wanting to save time, people also want appliances that require less effort to use. With that in mind, it's no surprise that the yearly number of refrigerators sold with bottom-mount freezers doubled from 2009 to 2019. The fridge gets opened a lot more than the freezer and most of us don't want to bend over whenever we're looking for a container of milk.

**Status.** The clearest sign of this priority is the growth of stainless-steel appliances. About half of dishwashers and three-quarters (76%) of bottom-mount refrigerators shipped in 2015 had stainless steel finishes. Five years before, the percentage for refrigerators was just 44%. This has nothing to do with durability, as many of today's factory-applied color finishes are durable, attractive and able to stand up to anything



a home cook can dish out. But stainless steel has become a status symbol, and as such it appeals to the highest number of future buyers.

By the way, some homeowners don't understand that not all stainless is the same – hues can be warmer or cooler depending on the nickel content. That makes it smart to take a sample of the cabinet or wall color to the appliance showroom to see which stainless makes the best match.

The most effective way to sort through all the available choices and make the right ones is to work with the builder's design team – usually the appliance distributor, interior decorator and kitchen designer.

As mentioned previously, it's also wise to start this process as early as possible, as homeowners who can take their time in selecting appliances will likely make better decisions. It's important to make the final selections *before* the cabinets are ordered so the kitchen designer can make sure everything fits together correctly.

Lastly, don't forget that building a kitchen is a team effort. If we make selections in a vacuum, we can end up with less-than-desirable outcomes. Select a builder with a team of professionals who work together to deliver a dream kitchen that specifically fits you and your family like expertly tailored clothing. **BG**



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