



Design: The Oven of Your Dreams

By Anna Kuchment
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Nov. 8 issue - Jane Freiman is crazy about her new Viking wall oven. The other night she made crisp sirloin steaks worthy of a chophouse. "You can get the rack extra-close to the heating element," she says. Later this month the New York City-based journalist and kitchen designer will start turning out Thanksgiving pies for her friends. In her old oven, with its uneven heat, she could use just one strategically placed rack at a time. Now she'll use all three.

Though busy Americans are cooking less than ever, fancy appliances are hot. To feed the demand, companies have churned out a variety of high-end ovens that seem to do everything but taste your food for you. The trend is toward ranges that look like they came from a restaurant kitchen: heavy-duty stoves with powerful burners and gleaming stainless-steel panels. But, beyond the facade, is there really a difference between an inexpensive 25-year-old range and a new \$23,000 model that's been hand-assembled in France? To find out, TIP SHEET roasted fresh Butterball turkeys in three new ovens and one old one, and compared the results.

GE Profile Wall Oven with Trivection Technology. This brand, released late last year, combines microwave, thermal and convection technology to dramatically slash cooking times. A pan of lasagne is done in 15 minutes, a baked potato in 17 minutes, cookies in 6. The Trivection roasted our 10-pound bird in one hour flat—with great results. We expected the microwaves to produce soggy skin and rubbery flesh. But the turkey tasted as though it had roasted slowly through an afternoon of football games, with crisp skin and juicy meat. And you can sidestep the high-tech add-ons and use it as a regular electric oven any time you're feeling old-school.

Viking all-gas convection range. The majestic Vikings, and comparable brands like Wolf and Dacor, draw home cooks who wish they were master chefs. Viking burners give off nearly twice as much heat (up to 15,000 British thermal units, or Btu) as ordinary stoves, bringing water to a rapid boil and allowing for perfect pan-searing. The oven and broiler also burn hotter so you can make a creme brulee without resorting to a blowtorch. Our 15-pound turkey cooked in only three hours with the convection fan turned on, and tasted great.

La Cornue. Williams-Sonoma recently began selling these ultra-high-end, hand-assembled stoves from France. The ovens are tiny—just big enough to fit a large turkey. They're vaulted so they allow air to circulate better than in a conventional oven. Our 18-pound turkey cooked in four hours and came out looking like we'd cut it out of a Norman Rockwell painting: absolutely perfectly browned. Another bonus: the stove comes with a unique cast-iron cooking plate that's hottest in the center and cooler near the edges. Cooks can shuffle up to four pots on its surface, putting up water to boil in the center and simmering stews on the edges. If you love the look of French stoves but can't afford a Cornue, check out the less expensive but equally beautiful Lacanche (frenchranges.com/lacanche).

Which is right for you? After determining your basic cooking needs and budget, Alex Cheimets, editor of [appliance advisor .com](http://applianceadvisor.com), suggests checking out bulletin boards like the appliances forum at ths.gardenweb.com or the rec.food.equipment group on google.com. As for tip sheet's "control" turkey, it roasted in an old Caloric oven for 4.5 hours and tasted as good as all the others. The basic choice boils down to this: how long do you really want to be trapped indoors with your family on Thanksgiving?

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