

The pulsing, beating heart of every good kitchen: the range cooker. However, the choice is no longer the simple always-on heatstore cast iron version; we now have a multitude of sizes, styles, finishes and colours, let alone features to struggle through before meeting the perfect partner for our needs. This really does show the appeal of these wonderful stalwarts of the kitchen, without this variety there would be far fewer individual, stylish and noteworthy kitchen designs in period properties throughout our beautifully varied land.

However, the continual appeal of the classically styled cast-iron range is undeniable, but even here many questions need to be posed and answered before picking the perfect one for your own personal needs. There are several ways in which an authentic range differs from a standard cooker, but you will adapt quickly to the changes. For example, there are two cast iron hobs, one for boiling and one for simmering. Both hobs are designed to run at a constant temperature and, rather than adjusting the heat, pans are simply moved from one hob to another; or to the appropriate area of each hob.

Similarly, the ovens are also constant heat, with each one providing a different temperature and use. By transferring dishes to, or within, the appropriate oven you can control your cooking with ease. The main mark of a true range cooker is the indirect oven heat technology. Essentially this means the heat source is located outside the oven, with heat permeating through the oven walls to provide a less harsh cooking environment – we have all heard of the wonderful stews and perfect cakes produced by the adept cook with the help of their trusty range.

Do you wish to bake and cook hot meals for a number of people on a daily basis? This is



where the always-on heat store cooker comes into its own, whether a two or four oven model, both are equally skilled at providing the constant heat source required to allow either the impulsive cook to create their masterpiece, or to bring forth a continual stream of meals to satisfy the hungriest of families. Some even have extended tops (whether as an optional companion or as part of the main body of the cooker) to provide additional gas or electric hobs to the large cooking surfaces found on this style of appliance.

Of course, there must always be an area of compromise with any choice or purchase, especially in the context of a period or listed home. In the case of the heatstore range, as its name implies, it is continually fuelled by oil, gas or electricity to provide a constant source of cooking heat – wonderful in the chillier months, but not ideal during the height of summer. Some models, such as the Redfyre Universal, allow you to switch the heatstore cooker off for extended periods but will still supply you with the full cooking service: two of its ovens will run independently of the heatstore system to provide you with conventional ovens and, a rare option with this style of cooker,

Home is the

a grill. When the full cooker is in use, these two ovens are totally integrated into the heatstore functionality and provide you with the added benefit of turning up the heat when you need an additional roasting oven for busy cooking times such as Christmas.

Do you require a cooker which also provides central heating and/or domestic hot water? There are fewer of these on the market but some of the brands available rate very highly in energy efficiency (such as Redfyre's Central Heating fully programmable range cooker, which is B rated in efficiency terms: the most energy efficient oil fired cooker available today) and provide the benefit of combining the cooker and boiler functions into one compact appliance. Or add to your consideration a wood fired central heating cooker, an important tool in these days of energy efficiency and carbon neutrality (when burnt, wood gives off only the amount of carbon dioxide it took in during growth, hence carbon neutral). Essential brands to consider in this market are Yeoman, a British company with its roots in the heart of the Devon countryside, and the sturdily attractive Wamsler range, the epitome of German solid fuel engineering.

Slam shut oven doors are also a feature well worth hunting out. Forgetting to fully close an oven door can result in the loss of valuable heat, and therefore cooking capabilities within not only that oven but any other ovens within the cooker as the result is a reduction in overall temperature which can take an hour or two to rebalance.

The solid appeal of these cookers are only enhanced by the meticulously hand crafted and hand enamelled finishes available in a glorious selection of colours – even though most of us choose the classic cream or the contemporary black for our period homes. As an important investment, adding appeal and value to the property, choice of colour is almost as important as the cooking features available. Envisage a beautifully warm claret coloured range cooker nestling amongst sturdy oak crafted cabinets: a vision you will delight in each and every day.

If the concept of an always-on cooker doesn't truly appeal, and your taste is a little more eclectic, the beauty of the French made Godin range cooker is well worth considering. Still with the important cast-iron credentials, but without the constant heat,



Range

this collection can be as simple or as ornate as you desire fitting in delightfully into a cottage or manor setting. They have the added bonus of an optional colour matching service to recreate the perfect accompaniment to your carefully chosen interior – and supported by the credentials of being a semi-professional cooker much loved by many Michelin starred French chefs.

All of these wonderful range cookers most certainly have a long history and evoke feelings of comfort and security, but in truth are very modern appliances offering all the features and advantages of more recent, contemporary alternatives. I know which I'd prefer as the beating heart of my home!

CONTACT DETAILS

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