The complete guide to
RANGE COOKING

In association with

AGA  Falcon  MERCURY  RANGEMASTER  RAYBURN
Welcome to the complete guide to range cooking, produced by Beautiful Kitchens magazine with AGA Rangemaster. Whether you’ve just started planning your kitchen or already have your heart set on a range – and, let’s face it, a range does speak to the heart – this guide will show how a range cooker makes a wonderful focal point in a kitchen of any size and style, while catering for your every cooking need. Do you want to cook like a professional? Look at the restaurant-quality build offered by Falcon. Is your kitchen the sleek hub of your home? Mercury offers unbeatable good looks in a modern palette. If it’s a trusted partner in the kitchen you’re after – one that can cope with hectic family life and entertaining – think Rangemaster. And if you want to come home to the character and warmth only a cast-iron range cooker can bring, choose from two heritage brands, AGA and Rayburn. Beautifully designed and built to last, a range is a worthwhile investment for any kitchen.

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BEAUTIFUL KITCHENS

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Fall in love with a range

With a great choice of sizes, styles, colours and fuel options, there’s a perfect range cooker for every kitchen.

Buying a range cooker is a decision made as much with the heart as with the head. This is an appliance to build your kitchen around, creating a stunning focal point and offering unbeatable functionality for the keen cook and busy family home. Classic, country, modern – there’s a design for every scheme, in a wide choice of colours and finishes, and for all fuel types, including solid fuel and LPG. You can enjoy the benefits of range cooking wherever you happen to live.

It’s easy to see the appeal of a range cooker – it has a great presence, which is a bonus in any kitchen design, paired with a generous amount of cooking space and hard-to-beat functionality. Keen cooks will be drawn to its sense of theatre and a nod to the professional kitchen, while those who have grown up with a heat-storage range cooker will hanker for its nostalgic warmth. They’ll also adore the technological advances that have brought AGA cookers into the modern age.

Cast iron or conventional?

There are two main types of range cookers and they really are quite different appliances. Cast-iron ranges, such as AGA and Rayburn, are fundamentally different from their conventional counterparts from Rangemaster, Falcon and Mercury. AGA and Rayburn cookers are made of cast iron and its the very fabric of the cooker that holds all the heat – they cook via radiant heat. Many of these traditional models are always on and ready to cook, although the new generation of electric AGA Dual Control and AGA Total Control models have enhanced programmability, enabling you to use a low-energy mode or switch on and off on demand, while Rayburn range cookers are fully programmable. Conventional ranges, on the other hand, work in the same way as built-in ovens and hobs, with a choice of styles, fuel types and features – including technology such as zoneless induction hobs, multifunction ovens, pyrolytic cleaning and a wide range of cooking programs and settings.

The cook’s choice

One of the real benefits of including a range cooker in your scheme is just how much cooking space you get. All models...
offer at least two generous ovens, usually with a high-powered separate grill and, in one case, a warming drawer. Surprisingly, the footprint of a standard range can be just 30cm wider than a built-in model but you get a lot of extra functionality with that footprint and, on some models, you can also use the oven cavities for storage when they are not in use.

Compared to a built-in oven, it’s easy to see the benefits a range can bring. You can cook two or more dishes at different temperatures at the same time, and keeping them warm is simple, so you can forget timing issues. The range’s cooktop stands up well to modern hobs, offering a choice of gas and induction on conventional models. These come with five gas burners as standard, usually including one wok burner, while cast-iron ranges offer simmering and boiling plates.

In addition to great functionality, most range cookers come with a wide range of accessories, such as griddle plates, to help achieve perfect results. Cast-iron ranges involve a different approach to cooking and have devotees who won’t cook on anything else but, if you’re new to this type of cooking, there are plenty of classes and demos to help.

**FUEL CHOICES**

From standard gas and electric to oil, LPG and solid fuel, there are options to suit your fuel supply and the way you cook. For conventional ranges, many of us still want dual fuel, teaming the control of a gas hob with the reliability of an electric oven, although induction hobs are increasingly popular. Energy prices are a consideration too. An AGA that uses oil can cost almost twice as much to run as the same model on gas, but there are more economical options. ‘You can run a new generation AGA from as little as £5 per week,’ says Kathryn Lowe, marketing manager at AGA. If a cast-iron model is a must-have, consider the AGA Total Control and the iTotal Control, which can be switched off when not in use.

**THE PERFECT FIT**

One of the misconceptions about range cookers is the issue of size. Yes, they are bigger than a built-in oven, but they also boast larger ovens and greater cooking flexibility. Both cast-iron and conventional models are available from just 900mm wide for a 2-oven range. Where space isn’t an issue, widths can reach a mighty 1,500mm for a 5-oven AGA, plus there are add-on 600mm modules available, too, so you can really tailor a configuration to suit. When choosing, think about how many people you regularly cook for and the number of people who are likely to use it at the same time, as well as the space available.

**CENTRE STAGE**

A range cooker will sit at the heart of your kitchen, providing a striking focal point. There are plenty of specialist showrooms where you can see a good choice of models, finishes, and colours, all with expert advice on hand – a good kitchen designer will also be able to create a suitable layout and advise on style. Most brands offer matching cooker hoods, while some, such as Rangemaster, offer refrigeration, taps and sinks for a perfectly coordinated look. Range cookers are built to last, so think long term when making buying decisions. Cast-iron cookers offer so much more than you might expect. These designs also provide heating, and not just in the immediate vicinity. Some models can supply your hot water and also power your entire central-heating system, feeding up to 20 radiators and doing away with the need for a boiler. If this scenario works for you, it can be an economical option in the long run.

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**‘QUITE SIMPLY, A RANGE COOKER ADDS CHARACTER AND SOUL TO YOUR HOME – SOMETHING YOU JUST CAN’T ACHIEVE WITH A BUILT-IN OVEN’**

_Holly Johnson, marketing manager, Rangemaster_

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**NEED TO KNOW...**

**Consider the following before you select a range cooker for your kitchen...**

- Choose from cast-iron models such as AGA and Rayburn or consider the conventional cooking offered by Rangemaster, Falcon and Mercury.
- Do try before you buy, or at least view the appliances you’re interested in first hand. Visit one of the specialist showrooms to see a wide range of models and to benefit from expert advice on what will suit your needs.
- Discuss the idea of a range from the outset with your kitchen designer. A good designer will be well-versed in creating a dynamic layout with a range at its heart, even if your room’s on the small side.
- Not all range cookers are huge – a standard range is only 50cm wider than a slot-in cooker or built-in model, and provides at least two generous oven cavities and separate grill, offering excellent cooking flexibility.
- Hob-top cooking can provide five gas burners, often with a high-powered wok ring; you can choose induction, too, and ranges come with extras such as griddles.
- A good range cooker can add value to your home or, if you can’t bear to say goodbye, you can take it with you. AGA offers a great relocation service.
At home with the range

Whether it’s the gentle ambient heat, the superior taste of the food or the classic look, cast-iron range cookers bring heart to the home.

Cast-iron range cookers come in all shapes and sizes, but with one thing in common – the food they produce tastes amazing. And that’s not all: there are models that can heat up to 20 radiators and offer all the hot water a family could need, as well as cookers that can be left on when you want them and switched off when you don’t. With a host of sizes, colours and fuel types available, there really is a cast-iron range cooker for everyone. And while these cookers have classic design values, their functionality is perfect for life in the 21st century.
CAST-IRON FOR A NEW AGE
Cast-iron cookers have, traditionally, been left on all the time but today’s models have a new flexibility. For example, the ovens and hotplates of the AGA Total Control can be switched on and off independently and can reach temperature within 30 minutes.

Rayburn cookers are fully programmable and there are models that also offer central heating and hot water, with A-rated condensing boiler technology. If you use renewable energy via a woodburning stove or solar panels, Rayburn’s clever Eco-connect system can link these to your Rayburn cooker so the hot-water supply automatically draws on the most renewable source at any given time.

PERFECT RESULTS
A cast-iron range cooker is made for every style of cooking. From quick weekday suppers – such as stir-fries, pizza or pasta – through to great Sunday roasts or complicated dinner parties, the food really does taste better.

This is because cast-iron heat-storage cooking is different to conventional cooking. Cast-iron range cookers use radiant heat. Instead of the direct, drying heat from a single heat source an AGA or Rayburn cooker uses indirect radiant heat that comes from each surface of the oven. This ensures that food remains moist and that all the flavour and goodness are locked in.

Classic cast-iron cooking
Heat-storage cooking requires a different approach. It’s all about where you place the dish or pan...

ON THE HOB TOP
AGA and Rayburn cookers have solid hotplates. The AGA has separate boiling and simmering plates, while there’s a single hotplate with graduated heat on the Rayburn. Both models allow for several pans to be used at the same time – three on each hotplate in the case of the AGA and eight along the Rayburn hotplate. You can cook food such as steak, scallops and asparagus directly on the hotplate, as well as toasted sandwiches, wraps and the famous AGA toast.

INSIDE THE OVENS
All heat-storage cookers have a simmering and roasting oven, but the 3-oven AGA has an additional baking oven and the 4-oven model has a baking oven plus a warming oven. There’s also a 5-oven AGA – the largest of all heat-storage range cookers – which offers all of the above, plus a slow-cooking oven.

All AGA ovens are large enough to hold a 13kg (28lb) turkey. They are also very flexible; for example, you can grill food at the top of the roasting oven, cook roasts in the centre and even bake a pizza directly on the floor of the oven.

NOTABLE AGA OWNERS INCLUDE HRH THE PRINCE OF WALES, DAVID CAMERON, MARY BERRY, KIRSTIE ALLSOPP AND KATE WINSLET

NEED TO KNOW
There’s much more to AGA and Rayburn cast-iron cookers than meets the eye...

- Cast-iron range cookers are naturally self-cleaning. Any spills within the ovens carbonise and can be swept out.
- AGA and Rayburn cookers come in a whole host of colours, from the classic cream through to modern shades, as well as some that are decidedly retro.
- Radiant heat ensures that even if you open the door halfway through baking a cake you won’t need to worry about it sinking in the middle.
- Each AGA shop holds both AGA and Rayburn cookery demonstrations, so you can try before you buy.
- Celebrity chefs love the AGA cooker – they say that, with solid hotplates and capacious ovens, it’s the closest thing you can get to a professional cooker.
- There are so many fuel types to choose from with a cast-iron range cooker. AGA cookers can run on electricity, natural or propane gas, and oil. As well as gas and oil models, Rayburn cookers also have solid-fuel and wood-burning versions.
- AGA and Rayburn cookers are almost completely recyclable and 70 per cent of each new design is made from salvaged material such as gearboxes, machinery, door fittings, drain covers and much more.
**Classic beauty**

Admired for its iconic looks and durable build, the traditional cast-iron range oven is so much more than a cooker: it’s an investment piece to build your new kitchen around.

Any owner of a cast-iron range will tell you that it’s more than just a cooker – it’s practically a member of the family. Few household objects, let alone appliances, garner that level of emotion and loyalty, but those who use them fall in love quickly and swear they will never go back – food tastes better, kitchens are blessed with a genuine warmth and ambience, and, come winter, the range is a magnet, with everyone jostling for space in its warm glow.

The 3-oven AGA Dual Control, shown here in White and priced at £9,495, can be sited anywhere in the kitchen.
INVESTMENT PIECE
Apart from the fact they make a real style statement, there are many other reasons to choose a cast-iron range. They are built to last so, although adding one to your kitchen involves an initial investment, your range is likely to last forever. They are also great in kitchens of all sizes, providing extra heat and creating a warm and welcoming atmosphere.

Cast-iron ranges such as AGA and Rayburn have at least two ovens – a simmering and a roasting oven. Larger models can have up to five, including baking, warming and slow-cooking ovens, ensuring you have the perfect conditions for preparing practically any dish. Cast-iron models – for example the traditional AGA – will also bring ambient heat for creating a warm and welcoming atmosphere.

STYLE TO SUIT YOU
Cast-iron ranges come in a good choice of sizes and are suitable for any home. From 987mm wide 2- and 3-oven models, which are ideal for more compact kitchens, to impressively generous 1,500mm 5-oven ranges, there’s something for everyone. In terms of style, range cookers are equally at home in traditional and modern schemes – simply pick one in a shade to complement or contrast with your cabinetry, although with so much choice it can be a tough decision. Everyone has their favourite range cooker colour. There are a whole host of shades available, from sleek contemporary colours such as Pewter and Pearl Ashes, through to softer, more retro-inspired hues – think Duck Egg Blue and Aqua,’ says Laura James of AGA.

The AGA heritage
Our love affair with AGA began more than 90 years ago. The AGA range was the brainchild of physicist and Nobel Prize winner Dr Gustaf Dalén. Blinded in a work accident, it was during his convalescence that Dalén came to realise just how much of his household’s time was taken up watching over food as it cooked on an unreliable range. Determined to develop something more efficient and easy to use, his first AGA heat-storage range appeared in 1922. Later, when talking about his invention, he revealed: ‘It seemed to me that a stove could be made that was more in tune with the high demands and the development in technique of our time.’

Each AGA is made from 70 per cent recycled material, including car parts and even lamp-posts. Every one is hand-cast by experts, every AGA begins as molten iron in Shropshire. Made in time-honoured fashion, it is a true piece of British craftsmanship. Aga Dual Control and Total Control models have additional modules from 600mm wide, but check that your chosen model will heat the maximum number of radiators in your home.

Classic cooking for a modern age
Developed to have classic styling but with modern living in mind, the latest cast-iron cookers not only look good but are fully controllable, too. AGA Dual Control cookers have a low-energy setting for the ovens, which can save up to 50 per cent more energy than a standard range cooker. A typical roasting oven sits at around 240°C, but by reducing this to less than 200ºC, the AGA Dual Control saves energy, while the simmering and baking hotplates can be heated individually and even fully turned off as and when required. Simple and intuitive to use, there’s one control for the hotplates and one for the ovens. On 5-oven models, an extra control operates the additional two ovens and the warming plate. AGA Dual Control ovens that are switched off

IN 2009, AN AGA DATING FROM 1932 WAS FOUND THAT WAS STILL BEING USED TO COOK WITH BY ITS 80-YEAR-OLD OWNER

in traditional and modern schemes - simply pick one in a shade to complement or contrast with your cabinetry, although with so much choice it can be a tough decision. Everyone has their favourite range cooker colour. There are a whole host of shades available, from sleek contemporary colours such as Pewter and Pearl Ashes, through to softer, more retro-inspired hues – think Duck Egg Blue and Aqua,’ says Laura James of AGA.

AGA AND RAYBURN AT A GLANCE
Compare specifications and select the ideal heat-storage range for your home

AGA
- **SIZE** From 987mm to 1,500mm for cast-iron models, additional modules from 600mm wide
- **COLOURS** Up to 18 colours
- **NUMBER OF OVENS** 2 to 5 ovens
- **FUEL** Electric, gas, wood, oil
- **WARMTH** Yes, will give a warm glow to even large rooms
- **CENTRAL HEATING & HOT WATER** No
- **CONTROLABILITY** A traditional AGA is designed to remain on at all times and the cast-iron body maintains a constant temperature in the ovens and hotplates. The AGA Dual Control and Total Control models have added controllability to enable low-energy modes to be used as well as turned on and off as required.

AGA, 0845 712 5207, AGALIVING.COM

RAYBURN
- **SIZE** From 840mm for the 200 Series to 995mm for the 650 Series
- **COLOURS**
- **NUMBER OF OVENS** 2
- **FUEL** Solid fuel, gas, oil, LPG, wood, electric
- **WARMTH** Yes, will give a warm glow to even large rooms
- **CENTRAL HEATING & HOT WATER** Yes, but check that your chosen model will heat the maximum number of radiators in your home.
- **CONTROLABILITY** All modern Rayburns are fitted with thermostats and both ovens and the hotplate are fully controllable and programmable. Turn on and off as required to suit your lifestyle.

RAYBURN, 0845 762 6147, RAYBURN.WEB.CO.UK

This 2-oven AGA, from £8,145, has been combined with an integrated AGA module, both in White, to offer added flexibility
Cast-iron ranges

completely will generally take up to four hours to reach the low-energy setting and eight hours to fully warm up. Consequently, it takes from two to four hours to go from the low-energy setting up to the maximum temperature.

NEW GENERATION OF AGA COOKERS
AGA Total Control range cookers have the same iconic good looks as classic designs but are packed with the very latest technology. Powered by electricity, they can be turned on and off at the touch of a button - or, in the case of AGA Total Control, remotely by smartphone app or text message - and they heat up rapidly when required. The ovens and hotplates can be individually controlled so, for example, you can choose to have just the boiling plate or roasting oven on, giving plenty of flexibility and saving energy at the same time, or, if preferred, a remote-control handset will allow an AGA to be programmed to suit you and your lifestyle. This is great for those who are concerned about the range being left on when they are out. The running costs of the AGA Total Control can start at as little as £5 per week. Another practical benefit of these models is the in-room venting technique, which means the range can be positioned anywhere in the room, giving you freedom and convenience in your kitchen design.

THE DETAILS: Rayburn

HOTPLATE: The solid one-piece cast-iron plate has graduated heat, so it’s easy to move pans from simmering to boil and anywhere in between. Larger models have space for up to eight saucepans.

Made from cast iron it uses indirect heat. A thermodial in the door shows the temperature at the centre of the oven, so it can simmer, bake and roast, with temperature ranges from 90 degrees to 250 degrees.

Depending on the model, this is suitable for use as both a cooking or a warming oven. The cast-iron cooking oven heats to around half the main oven temperature, while the sheet-metal warming-oven option available on some Rayburns operates at one-third of the temperature of the main oven.

A SURVEY BY RAYBURN IS ESSENTIAL BEFORE YOU BUY. IT WILL ADVISE ON WHERE TO SITE YOUR RANGE AND WHICH FUEL AND FLUE ARE BEST FOR YOU

The Rayburn heritage

Also built in Shropshire, each and every Rayburn is built by hand. Using methods developed over its 68-year heritage, Rayburn iron masters continue the traditions of expert craftsmanship and each oven is built from solid cast iron with exceptional attention to detail. From the molten casting through the layers of vitreous enameling to the hand assembly, each one is created with enormous pride. As with its sister brand the AGA, 70 per cent of a Rayburn is made from recycled material and its green credentials don’t stop there. Complies with hi-tech boiler designs and technologies, the Eco mode settings deliver high levels of efficiency, including some oil and gas condensing central-heating boiler models that are rated A for energy.

HOT WATER, TOO

As well as cooking, most Rayburns also provide a home with hot water and central heating, and the latest boiler design and burner technology ensures these ranges meet the high levels of A rated efficiency expected from modern heating systems. They are fully programmable and fitted with thermostats for easy heat adjustment, while digital sensors control both the oven and boiler to ensure constant temperatures. Rayburns can be easily turned on or off, giving greater flexibility and lower energy bills.

‘It really is the world’s best-looking boiler,’ says Nigel Morrison, marketing manager for Rayburn. ‘You don’t need to have an ugly white box in the kitchen or a separate boiler in the utility room to enjoy the heat from up to 20 radiators. It’s also the only range cooker that offers a rated condensing central heating.’ Check what the model you’re interested in offers before you buy; the smallest will provide enough heat for two or three radiators, while larger Rayburns, such as the 600 Series, will heat far more.

If you’re interested in learning more about these classic ranges, there’s a video on the AGA website that explains the AGA cooker’s unique features, as well as an introductory video by Dick Strawbridge on the Rayburn website.
Case study

Mission control

Reliable results and ultimate efficiency made AGA Total Control the perfect choice for food writer Lucy Young

PROJECT PROFILE

THE OWNERS Lucy Young, cookery writer and assistant to baking guru Mary Berry, lives with her husband Peter Borcherds, who works in IT

THEIR HOME An 18th-century three-bedroom cottage in Berkshire

THE PROJECT A full house renovation including the kitchen

COOKER 3-oven AGA Total Control, from £10,395

CABINETRY Try Siematic for a similar style (siematic.co.uk)

Flexibility was key for cookery writer and assistant to Mary Berry, Lucy Young. She’d previously owned AGA range cookers and, when she moved to her new home in Berkshire, she knew exactly which model she wanted. ‘I’ve always loved the Duck Egg Blue AGA,’ reveals Lucy. ‘It was the first one I ever cooked on when I was 19 and, when the colour was relaunched, I knew it was what I wanted.’

Although Lucy selected a traditional AGA colour, the rest of her kitchen is distinctly modern with cool white cabinetry. A roof lantern floods the space with light, while shades of grey help to create a room that feels both open and bright yet homely and warm.

‘Our house is very well insulated but, because we have a Total Control model, we can have the AGA on all year round,’ says Lucy. ‘I chose it because of the flexibility it offers.

‘I could never have a kitchen without an AGA. They’re so beautiful and intuitive – they make you a better cook,’ she reveals. ‘I love baking. There’s nothing nicer than giving someone a cake – it feels nurturing.’

WE HAVE OUR AGA TOTAL CONTROL ON SLUMBER OVERNIGHT, SWITCH IT OFF WHEN WE GO AWAY AND ONLY PUT THE HOTPLATES ON WHEN WE NEED THEM’
The latest conventional range cookers offer great flexibility. Even the compact models create a statement and all designs boast hi-tech features that will speak to the chef within. Programmable multifunction ovens, powerful grills, induction hobs and wok burners create a cooking theatre suitable for family cooks, professional chefs and stylish entertainers alike.
THE RIGHT RANGE FOR YOU

It’s easy to get lost with so much choice, so the first thing to consider when selecting a range is size. If you’re creating a new kitchen scheme, discuss your needs with your designer as they can advise how the available options will impact on your kitchen design. Think about what kind of cook you are. Large families and those who entertain regularly will benefit from the two large ovens most ranges offer, plus a separate grill. Traditionalists will probably prefer a gas hob, while those wanting to cook like the professionals might opt for induction. ‘Cooking for lots of people is simple with a range cooker,’ says Holly Johnson, marketing manager for Rangemaster, Falcon and Mercury. ‘With a minimum of five burners and two ovens, there is plenty of room to cook for the masses. The 1,000mm Rangemaster models can fit eight pizzas in just one oven.’

SENSE OF STYLE

Throw away the rule book when choosing the style of your range. A move towards eclectic looks in kitchen design makes it easy to mix traditional and modern, so a fabulous, flat-fronted black Mercury will look equally at home set between bright white handleless cabinetry or warm oak Shaker style units. ‘Range cookers have moved on from primarily being associated with traditional kitchens and are now popular in a modern setting,’ says Graeme Smith, senior designer at Second Nature Kitchens. ‘They can provide a homely contrast in a contemporary kitchen and help to inject personality into the scheme. This stems from several factors – one being the growing popularity of home-cooking, which has been led by the media appeal of celebrity chefs. Suppliers have responded with a wider choice of range cookers. No longer just available in stainless steel or black finishes, there’s now a selection of more exciting colours. This allows freedom to coordinate, complement or contrast with the kitchen colour scheme, meaning you can make the range stand out as a key feature or be streamlined within the design.’

Selecting the right look is all about confidence and that goes for colour, too. Over the past few years, the classic black and cream shades have been joined by a softer palette. Rangemaster ranges are now available in 21 colours, both Falcon and Mercury have a choice of nine shades. Finally, coordinating appliances in the shape of matching extractor hoods and even, in the case of Rangemaster, fridges, dishwashers, sinks and taps, will help to pull the scheme together into a cohesive whole.

Choose a range to suit your style

Each brand has its unique features so it’s worth getting a good understanding of what’s available before making your final decision.

RANGEMASTER The complete choice

It says something that eight of the top-10 best buy range cookers, as chosen by Which?, are Rangemaster models, with the Professional Plus 90 dual-fuel model topping the list. Comprising 15 models in up to 21 colours and a variety of hob-top choices, there are over 700 possible variations in the Rangemaster stable, guaranteeing a perfect fit with any style and budget. The compact 900mm options still include two ovens, the smaller of which is large enough to accommodate four chickens at once. The 1,000mm models combine style and function for those who want a little more space, while the grand 1,100mm ranges offer flexibility with a hob than has ample room for up to six pans. Fuel choices are varied, too, with both electric- and gas-only ovens available to combine with ceramic, induction and a gas hob. If gas is your preferred fuel but you don’t have a supply direct to your home, then the Rangemaster dual-fuel models are convertible to LPG (liquid petroleum gas). And the collection includes more than just cookers. Matching hoods and splashbacks make a style statement as do fridge freezers and wine storage, not to mention its own sinks and taps. Rangemaster, 0870 789 6100, rangemaster.co.uk.

The Rangemaster heritage

First made in Leamington Spa in 1830, Rangemaster is Britain’s oldest range cooker brand and is still made in the UK. It’s also the most popular, sitting at the heart of more British homes than any other brand. Almost 184 years ago, the Kitchener was the first in what became a long line of designs built on the same site. And, it’s still being created today – although reconfigured and redesigned for modern-day living. All Rangemaster cookers are made from heavy-duty, high-quality steel. It doesn’t make them light, but it does create a sturdy, stable frame that’s built to last. From the elegance of the Elan to the chic illuminated fascia of the Hi-LITE, there’s a great choice of designs.
FALCON The professional cooker

If you want to cook like a Michelin-starred chef then the equipment you choose is key to achieving restaurant-quality results. Falcon is synonymous with professional cooking, having been at the centre of commercial kitchens for many years. Most models come with two large high-performance ovens, one multifunction and one fanned with stay-clean removable liners – a real boon for those who hate cleaning. The grill features a fully extending, gliding tray that makes checking and removing dishes a breeze. As well as gas and induction hub options, including a 5kW burner, there’s a variety of cooktops, including an induction hob option. There’s also the Falcon cooker, a professional look central plate with a heat source that gently decreases as you move out from the centre, allowing for the use of several saucepans at the same time. The 900mm is the smallest of the Falcon ranges but there’s no compromise on performance. As well as a large multifunction oven, it features a tall fan oven with a 66-litre capacity. Built to last – even the controls are ink-moulded and injected onto a chrome plate, rather than painted onto the body – the stainless-steel one-piece grillplate with a choice of matt or gloss pan supports sets it apart from less sturdy competitors. Serious about your cooking? The 9092 collection offers top-spec features that wouldn’t be out of place in a restaurant kitchen. Falcon, 0870 789 5107, falconappliances.com

MERCURY The modern take

The combination of beautiful styling and first-class cooking performance has made the Mercury a firm favourite for home users in the decade since its launch. From its chunky hi-fi inspired controls to the instantly recognisable steel side trims, it has rapidly become an object of desire and an essential part of many contemporary schemes, providing the perfect balance of style and substance. Available in three sizes – 1,000mm, 1,082mm and 1,200mm – all have a choice of dual fuel and induction hobs. For those with big families or who are regular entertainers, the 2-oven combinations range from 66 and 68 litre capacity in the 1,000mm to 81 and 78 litres in the 1,200mm. This, combined with a variety of cooktops, ensures a Mercury range is the perfect partner for creating delicious meals. Heavyweight gas hobs with chunky cast-iron burners add to the designer look, while induction hobs are available as an option on all models for those who want an up-to-the-minute, controllable cooking surface. With a choice of eight colours, including stainless steel, the bold Blueberry and Liquorice are perfect for urban schemes while, softer colours such as Purple Haze and Truffle will sit beautifully in more relaxed designs. For traditionalists there are Black, White and Oyster models, too. The wall-hung, flat-fronted ovens, one multifunction and two large high-performance ovens, one multifunction and one fanned with stay-clean removable liners – a real boon for those who hate cleaning. The grill features a fully extending, gliding tray that makes checking and removing dishes a breeze. As well as gas and induction hub options, including a 5kW burner, there’s a variety of cooktops, including an induction hob option. There’s also the Falcon cooker, a professional look central plate with a heat source that gently decreases as you move out from the centre, allowing for the use of several saucepans at the same time. The 900mm is the smallest of the Falcon ranges but there’s no compromise on performance. As well as a large multifunction oven, it features a tall fan oven with a 66-litre capacity. Built to last – even the controls are ink-moulded and injected onto a chrome plate, rather than painted onto the body – the stainless-steel one-piece grillplate with a choice of matt or gloss pan supports sets it apart from less sturdy competitors. Serious about your cooking? The 9092 collection offers top-spec features that wouldn’t be out of place in a restaurant kitchen. Falcon, 0870 789 5107, falconappliances.com

The Falcon heritage

With a long history in commercial catering equipment spanning more than 75 years, Falcon brings the build quality and high performance of a professional kitchen to the home, making it the perfect choice for passionate cooks. It’s a favourite of many chefs, including Nick Nairn, who not only has a number in his cookery schools in Scotland but also has one in his home. A solid stainless-steel body, one-piece hotplate and sturdy styling all combine with hi-tech oven functions to produce a satisfyingly robust yet elegant range that’s perfect for those wanting to create beautiful dishes every day of the week.

The Mercury heritage

One of the most recent additions to the AGA family, Mercury ovens are the new kid on the block, yet already their steel side panels and no-fuss frontage have made them highly desirable. Launched 14 years ago in a highly competitive market, its developers were keen to create a brand that stood for cutting-edge design and attention to detail. The first Mercury was launched in January 2000 and combined innovative design with outstanding performance. Now, as part of the AGA Rangemaster Group, each Mercury is hand-crafted by craftsmen in the Leamington Spa factory, combining years of tradition with bold, modern styling to create an icon of the future.
CONVENTIONAL AGA
In addition to the traditional cast-iron heat-storage models that AGA is known and loved for, the AGA is also available as a conventional range cooker. Offering the same good looks but without the heat-storage element, the AGA Masterchef and S-Series offer a contemporary solution. The S-Series (Two-Four and Six-Four) ovens have the same traditional look as a cast-iron AGA, including the much-loved, iconic enamelled finish, but with electric ovens, gas or ceramic hotplates and a ceramic electric grill.

The impressive Masterchef XL is a high-performance conventional range cooker with contemporary styling. It has two 69-litre ovens – one multifunction and one fan – plus a separate grill and a choice of either a six-burner gas hob with griddle and wok burner or a five-zone induction hob, depending on which fuel source suits you. It’s a great choice for those who aspire to owning an AGA but who prefer to have the instant control of a conventional range.

Desirable features

Conventional range cookers are packed with hard-working features designed to deliver the best results for all methods of cooking

**Teppanyaki griddle**
A non-stick, easy-clean coating ensures the teppanyaki is great to cook on and easy to clean. It fits snugly over gas burners and is ideal for Japanese-style food. It’s also a healthy way to cook an old-fashioned English breakfast.

**Glide-out grill**
The smooth-action telescopic runners on the Glide-out grill means it is really simple to check up on your food as it’s cooking. It’s much safer than a traditional grill pan on shelf supports, too.

**Multifunction oven**
All Rangemaster multifunction ovens have at least seven cooking functions – some have eight – for a flexible cooking experience. As well as a fan oven, conventional oven and base heat, there’s also a defrost function, fanned grilling and a browning element.

**Fan oven**
If you batch cook, then a fan oven is a great solution. This function draws air from the interior of the oven, heats it up and forces it back into the cavity again, maintaining an even heat throughout and ensuring all your fairy cakes look the same.

**Handyrack**
A unique feature to Rangemaster, the Handyrack attaches to the main oven door. When you open the door, the rack pulls out with it, meaning your hands are free to baste your roast without the risk of scorching them on the roasting pan.

**Warming zone**
A real benefit when entertaining, Rangemaster’s warming zone will keep dishes at temperature while the rest of the meal is prepared. Perfect for sauces, starters and soups, it has a maximum temperature of 70°C.
Small wonders

Don’t be put off by size – a range can work beautifully in a compact space

It’s easy to picture a range cooker in a spacious room but what are the options for the smaller kitchen? AGA is poised to unveil an exciting new launch any day soon – hotly tipped to be a compact 600mm model that offers all the benefits of the classic AGA cooker in a neat little package – a baby AGA, if you like, that’s perfectly suited to the smaller home in town or country. Of the current ranges, the AGA S-Series Four-Two conventional range has two ovens, the iconic enamel surface and all the heart-warming good looks of a classic AGA. And don’t forget that 900mm models are just 30cm wider than standard ovens, offering excellent functionality while giving your scheme a striking focal point.

SUITABLE RANGES

You will find 900mm range cookers from Rangemaster, Falcon and Rayburn that work beautifully in a small kitchen. ‘You only have to give up a little bit of space to gain a whole lot more cooking, making this a huge draw for keen cooks,’ says Holly Johnson, marketing manager for Rangemaster, Falcon and Mercury. ‘The built-in storage offered on some models can provide a home for pans and large casserole dishes when not in use, plus you’ll save on the cost of cabinetry.’ Your kitchen designer will be able to provide sketches or CAD drawings to show a range cooker in situ, but you can also use a favourite design trick yourself by cutting a life-size template from newspaper to move around the room. It gives a really good feel for space and allows you to try out different positions.
Compact kitchens

CONVENTIONAL WISDOM
While you might not want to invest in a heat-storage model that’s likely to be on all the time in a very small space, the AGA Total Control really comes into its own here – turn it off when you don’t need it, safe in the knowledge that it comes up to temperature rapidly when you do. Although slightly wider, at 987mm, it’s a good investment in terms of oven capacity. Rayburn models start at 840mm wide for the 200 Series and the Rayburn XT is just over 900mm.

BALANCED APPROACH
Although options are often restricted in small spaces, it pays to design the layout around the range as a focal point and to ensure that there is a decent amount of workspace either side for comfortable cooking. Think about the colour of your appliance and the impact this will have on the room as a whole. You might want to choose one in a shade that blends with the hues of your cabinetry, such as white with white, charcoal or stainless steel with grey, and so on, but don’t rule out contrast. For instance, in a small double galley with sleek white units, a sudden pop of colour can make the room feel fresh and vibrant. Choose a splashback or even floor to match – in a compact space, you can afford to be daring in suitably small doses.

Perfectly formed

It may be compact, but the Morleys’ kitchen has been enhanced by the addition of a range

PROJECT PROFILE

THE OWNERS Danielle Morley, a nurse practitioner, and her husband, John

THEIR HOME A 1960s three-bedroom semi in County Durham

THE PROJECT The whole house was completely renovated, from rewiring to decorating

COOKER Rangemaster Elan 90, from £1,780

CABINETRY Try the Kuta range at Magnet (magnet.co.uk)

WHEN DANIELLE AND JOHN MORLEY STARTED PLANNING THEIR new kitchen, they had some must-have features in mind. Along with classic Shaker cabinetry, they wanted their first kitchen together to have a Rangemaster at its heart. ‘We wanted a contemporary yet timeless scheme,’ says Danielle, ‘and the cooker we eventually chose is the perfect match. Although the room is compact, we love the look of our gorgeous Rangemaster Elan – it’s so classic yet contemporary. Plus, it’s really easy to use.’

The black cooker with steel trim is the perfect accompaniment to the Morleys’ smart kitchen scheme, where white cabinetry from Magnet is topped with a warm wooden worksurface and multi-hued stone flooring. A Rangemaster extractor takes away steam and cooking smells quickly and efficiently, while Rangemaster also supplied the coordinating splashback. ‘It’s the focal point of the kitchen,’ says Danielle. ‘We’d never be without a range now.’

NEED TO KNOW
Thinking small...

- For galley or narrow kitchens, pick a model with a flat front and streamlined handles so there’s less to catch on
- To maximise space, opt for a model with at least two ovens
- Invest in good ventilation: matching hoods are available for both professional-style models and cast-iron cookers
- A stainless-steel range with induction hob gives clean lines, plus you can use the hob as worktop space when not in use
For any new appliance, it really helps to have someone to show how to master its functions – this is especially true of a heat-storage cooker, which embraces a whole other way of cooking. The following places offer open days, demonstrations and cookery classes, so prepare to hone your skills, gain new ones and fall in love with a range.

AGA SHOPS
0845 712 5207, agaliving.com
With 70 stores nationwide, the AGA shops are a great introduction to the brand. Demonstrations range from ‘How to get the best from your AGA’ taster sessions to themed cookery events, such as making canapés. Run by experienced professionals who have an in-depth knowledge of every model in the AGA family, you’ll come away with some brilliant tips and have a chance to talk to other owners. If you’re new to cast-iron range cooking or are thinking about investing, try the free ‘Beginners Guide to your AGA’ sessions – one-to-ones are available, too. The AGA Living website lists affiliated cookery schools where you can take your skills to a whole new level.

DIVERTIMENTI
0870 129 5026, divertimenti.co.uk
The Marylebone High Street Divertimenti cookery school in London has two live Falcon range cookers – you can compare the 1092 Deluxe and the 1000. AGA demonstrations are also available at both its London stores. Classes include ‘Fish and shellfish’ and ‘Knife skills’, with prices from £40.

LESLEY’S COOKERY SCHOOL
0844 800 4633, lesleywaters.com
Former Head Chef at Leith’s School of Food and Wine, Lesley Waters has her own cookery school in Dorset. Lesley’s Cookery School at Abbot’s Hill Farm is all about creating fresh, simple, great food. It offers a wide range of one- and two-day courses suited to all abilities, with plenty of opportunity to get to grips with the Rangemaster Professional Deluxe ovens used at the school. Courses and demonstrations include ‘Bread and baking’ and the ‘Seasonal Dorset kitchen’. Prices start at £79.

MERCURY
0870 756 1236, mercuryappliances.co.uk
There are a number of Mercury display centres nationwide where you can take a closer look at the models. Find your nearest stockist online. Or get hands on at cookery school The Bertinet Kitchen in Bath (thebertinetkitchen.com), which has a live RC1090 range.

NICK NAIRN COOK SCHOOL
01877 389900, nicknairncookschool.com
Chef Nick Nairn uses Falcon range cookers at his two cookery schools in Scotland’s Port of Menteith and Aberdeen – and at home. Catering to cooks of all levels, the ‘Quick cook’ two-hour sessions cost from £49, with day courses from £149. Private bookings can also be made for special occasions.

RAYBURN
0845 762 6147, rayburn-web.co.uk
A Rayburn range offers both heating and cooking, so it’s worth attending a demonstration to get a feel for what will work best for you. Specialist retailers, including AGA shops, run events throughout the year, from basic demos to themed sessions, most of which are free – but booking ahead is essential. There are also drop-in open days – you’ll find details of both on the website.