

<ALL ABOUT> Pro-Style Ranges

You don't need to be an Iron Chef to fall for the allure of a pro-style cooker. TOH explains how to pick the right one for your space, cooking style, and budget **BY JOSH GARSKOF**

FEW THINGS DEFINE an upscale kitchen like one of these brawny beauties. With heavy cast-iron grates, beefy knobs and handles, and high-Btu burners, the pro-style range has become the modern-day hearth: a dramatic focal point in the home's main gathering place. Of course, one of these serious stoves can boost your cooking prowess, too—not to mention your home's resale value.

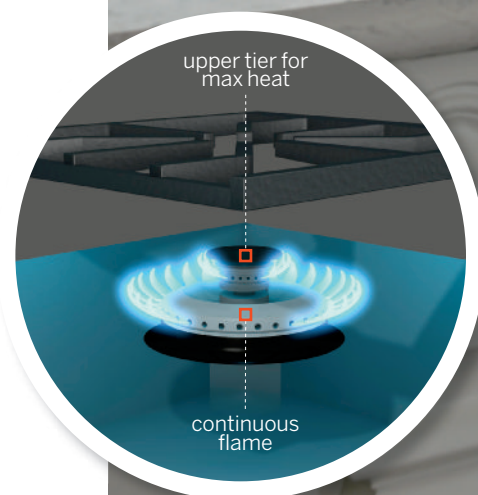
Industrial-style appliances started gaining ground in the 1980s, when homeowners began hankering for restaurant ranges to get more burners, more power, and more pro features, like built-in griddles and grills. But at up to 36 inches from front to back, these behemoths didn't fit neatly into your average cook space. They also lacked broilers and became dangerously hot.

Enter the "pro-style" solution. Scaled to fit standard-depth counters, these models won't burn down the house, thanks to beefed-up insulation. But their biggest burners still blast out 18,000 to 25,000 Btus—versus a basic range's 12,000 Btus—for searing and sautéing, while their smallest burners deliver a gentle simmer, prized for soups, sauces, and melting butter.

Of course, a pro-style range is no small investment. We'll walk you through all the options and considerations, so you'll know just what to look for when you're ready for this serious kitchen upgrade.

THE POWER BURNER

A hallmark of pro-style ranges is at least one high-heat burner that can blast out 18,000 to 25,000 Btus (British thermal units), a measure of energy. Different manufacturers use different designs to deliver the heat in an even pattern. This burner relies on two stacked brass disks ringed with gas jets to put out a full spectrum of heat, from low to high.



VITALS

WHAT SIZE?

Most pro-style ranges come in standard widths of 30, 36, 48, and 60 inches. Larger widths mean more burners or other cooktop options, such as griddles and grills, and more oven space, too. The ovens in a 36-inch unit can handle catering trays; 48- and 60-inch models can fit two ovens.

HOW MUCH DO THEY COST?

You can pay anywhere from \$3,500 to \$20,000 for a pro-style range, depending on the size, features, and model.

WHAT IF IT BREAKS?

Expect to get at least 20 years out of your investment, but features like electronic burner ignitions can be extremely costly to replace when they fail, and finding companies to service some lesser-known brands can be difficult.

GAS OR ELECTRIC?

While pro-style burners are always gas, they can be paired with a gas or an electric oven (the latter option is known as "dual fuel"). Electric ovens offer more cooking modes and more even heat but can add as much as \$2,000 to the cost. Some cooks prefer gas ovens for their moister heat. Most pro-style gas ovens don't self-clean, and those that do cost at least \$1,000 more.

With its stainless-steel body and top-quality details, a pro-style range looks at home in almost any style of kitchen. Shown: Wolf 36-inch range, \$6,930; subzero-wolf.com

ILLUSTRATION: JOHN MACNEILL



Before you buy

High-power ranges come with some special considerations. Here are the basics to keep in mind



Assess your ventilation.

Pro-style power produces pro-style humidity, odor, carbon monoxide, and, if a recipe goes wrong, smoke. So a vent hood that exhausts outside is a must. The more Btus the range puts out, the more air—measured in cubic feet per minute, or cfm—the blower needs to be able to move. (Find a calculator for sizing a hood to your range and particular installation at thisoldhouse.com/may2014.) If possible, buy a hood from the same manufacturer and line as the range to ensure a good match.



Check your supply line.

A pro-style range can be ordered for either natural gas or propane. Manufacturers' recommendations for gas-line size vary, from ½ inch to ¾ inch; always check the specifications. Dual-fuel requires a 240-volt electrical line.



Measure it. A typical entry doorway is 36 inches wide, so if you opt for a bigger range, hatch a plan to get it into the house before the delivery truck pulls up. Weight can be an issue too. Some oversize ranges with cast-iron components weigh more than

900 pounds. Floor joists may need reinforcement to safely withstand the heavy load.



Be prepared for the heat.

The cook space gets pretty toasty when you're blasting up to six power burners, plus a griddle or grill, sometimes all at once. Proper ventilation helps, of course, but you'll also want to buy heavy-bottomed pans that are several inches larger than the burners so that the heat isn't just bypassing them. Keep in mind, too, that the heavy cast-iron grates that are standard on most of these ranges radiate more heat than traditional steel grates and can take an hour or so to cool off completely. Handle them with caution during cleanup.



Test it. Look for a retailer that has the floor models connected to live gas so that you can give them a test drive—and not just by turning them on. Boil water, fry an egg, or try melting a bar of chocolate and keeping it glossy instead of having it turn grainy. Some showrooms also host chef demos on pro techniques, such as sautéing asparagus on a griddle or making a roast in a steam oven.

BURNER BASICS

The facts behind the flames

HIGH BTUS The signature feature of any pro-style range is one or more burners capable of super-high heat for searing, sautéing, and fast boiling. But don't get too hung up on the number of Btus. For most home chefs, 18,000 Btus is plenty hot. Remember, too, that a bigger number doesn't necessarily translate to better performance; it all depends on the quality of the burner and controls.

LOW SIMMER Equally important is a burner that can handle delicate tasks, like simmering an untended pot of chili all afternoon without bringing it to a boil—or a burn. Different manufacturers use different technologies to achieve a steady, even heat, typically putting out 350 to 850 Btus. So be sure to test the simmer before you buy.

CLOSED BURNERS The vast majority of ranges offer sealed burners, which means the entire range top allows no place for spills or grease to drip down into the stove. As a result, jets are positioned so that the gas flows out to the side, then up, slightly reducing efficiency but making cleanup a relatively painless task.



OPEN BURNERS In this setup (like the BlueStar burner, above), gas jets shoot straight up from a burner that's suspended over an opening, drawing in lots of oxygen to fuel the flames. Pots and pans heat fast and evenly, but spills collect in a drip pan beneath the burner that must be removed for cleaning.

Six eye-catching picks

From small to supersized, colorful to traditional, these pro-style ranges will make any kitchen shine

1> RED HOT This splashy all-gas Bertazzoni range dresses up rugged stainless steel with fire-engine-red enamel. Its 30-inch frame has four sealed burners and a gas convection oven. Also available in six other color options. \$3,999; us.bertazzoni.com

2> SMART AND STYLISH This sturdy 30-inch dual-fuel GE Monogram range comes with four sealed burners; reversible cast-iron grates can be flipped to fit a wok pan. A handy center grate provides a continuous surface for parking hot pots. \$5,499; monogram.com

3> SUPER SLEEK Two pairs of sealed burners sandwich an electric griddle on this 36-inch gas model from Thermador. The star-shaped burners are designed for faster boiling time; two have simmer settings that hold temperatures as low as 100 degrees F. \$6,899; thermador.com

4> TRIMMED OUT This dual-fuel white-enamel and stainless-steel beauty from Ilve comes in a retro 40-inch size. Remove the grates on two of its six open burners for a griddle insert. Comes in six other colors and with the added option of bronze, brass, or chrome trim. \$8,249; ilveappliances.com

5> CHEF FAVORITE This 48-inch BlueStar range has two gas ovens (one a convection) and eight open burners, including two that hit a searing 25,000 Btus. Char-broiler and griddle inserts are interchangeable; swap in as needed. Comes in 750 colors and finishes. \$9,980; bluestarcooking.com

6> MEGA MODEL Cooking for an army? This 60-inch Capital self-cleaning gas range gets the job done with six open burners and dual convection ovens. Lift the cover to expose a 24-inch griddle or grill. \$14,529; capital-cooking.com



PHOTO: (OPPOSITE PAGE 1) ANNIE SCHLECHTER/COURTESY BERTAZZONI

Know your range

Which setup you choose depends on the size of your kitchen, cooking ambitions, and budget. Tour a typical 48-inch to take a closer look at some standard features and interesting options

GRILL OPTION


Taking the space of two burners, this slotted grate sits over an open flame. Demands a robust ventilation hood, set on maximum power, to handle the smoke. Burners, heat diffusers, and drip pan are usually dishwasher safe for cleanup.

CONTINUOUS GRATES

Interlocking pieces of cast iron let pots slide easily between burners.

SIMMER BURNER

Puts out a steady, gentle flame (generally from 250 to 850 Btus) for low-heat tasks, like melting butter.




GRIDDLE OPTION

A flat stainless-steel surface—sometimes with a super-tough nonstick coating—ideal for everything from scrambling eggs to cooking shrimp *plancha*-style. A dishwasher-safe drip pan collects grease. Takes the place of two burners, so is available only on 36-inch or larger ranges. Can sometimes be ordered double-wide.


BOILER BURNER

High-heat element that can put out from 18,000 to 25,000 Btus. Ideal for searing, sautéing, and boiling.


CHOOSE YOUR SETUP At 36 inches, you have the option of extra burners or a griddle or grill. Go bigger and get both, a double griddle, or even the French top (shown on opposite page).




30"



36"



48"



60"

INFRARED BROILER

A rectangular heating element at the top of the oven radiates energy waves through the entire cavity, heating food faster and more evenly than a conventional broiler does, with no pre-heating. Available only in gas models.



KNOB

Hefty dials, a signature feature of these ranges, should turn smoothly and afford pinpoint control of the burners.

CONVECTION

One or more fans circulate heat within the oven cavity for even cooking. Standard in at least one oven.

GLIDE RACKS

Ball-bearing tracks, standard on most high-end ranges, let stainless-steel oven racks slide out smoothly—even when holding a 25-pound turkey. Not all racks are created equal, of course, so test them.

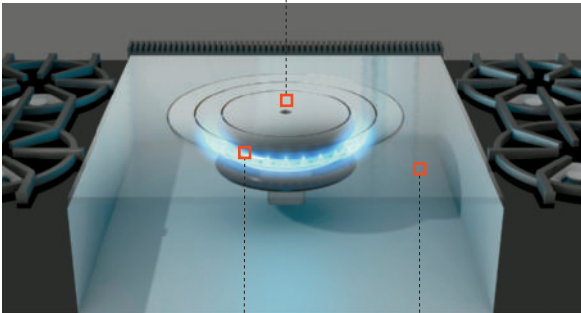
STEAM OPTION

In some dual-fuel ranges with two ovens, one can be powered by steam or have a “steam assist,” either instead of or in addition to the electric coil. This produces moist heat ideal for roasting lean meats. Requires a water line.

THE FRENCH-TOP OPTION

Why pro chefs love this versatile burner

The French top replaces four burners with a cast-iron plate ideal for cooking with multiple pots at different temperatures at the same time. Beneath the plate is a circular high-Btu burner that radiates heat outward from the center, so you can, say, boil water in the middle and simmer a sauce toward the edge. As such, it suits the fast-paced cooking of a restaurant kitchen. But because the flame is concealed, it can be hard to know when the metal is hot. And the plate may discolor quickly with use—not a problem where the range isn’t on display.



high-heat area for boiling, sautéing

below-the-surface burner ring

low-heat area for warming, simmering

MOPPING UP THE MESS

How to clean your showpiece

These stainless-steel beauties may sparkle in the showroom, but keeping them that way at home takes a little TLC. First, and most important, remove spills and grime pronto to avoid buildup. Wipe down cast-iron grates with soapy water; soak them if needed. Avoid abrasives, bleach, and the dishwasher to preserve the grates’ enamel coating, which protects the cast iron against rust. Towel dry for the same reason. If you do nick the coating, rub vegetable oil onto the exposed metal.

Use a specialty stainless-steel cleaner and a soft cloth, wiping in the direction of the grain, on appropriate metal surfaces.

No self-cleaning oven? Put a pan of water inside and set the temperature on high heat for about an hour to loosen built-up gunk; wipe out the interior with a damp cloth or sponge and mild detergent, as needed.

Beyond industrial chic

These high-performance ranges trade the restaurant look for vintage charm, with many of the features found in pro-style models



ANTIQUE LOOK

Victorian-era style meets modern utility in the Elmira 1865-ST. Copper trim and a textured black finish dress up a cooktop with four gas and two electric burners. In a stealthy twist, the top cabinet conceals digital controls for the single electric oven (the three doors are really one). \$8,220; [elmirastoveworks.com](#)



BRITISH BEAUTY

A contemporary update on the old coal-fired cast-iron cooker, this handsome import is forged of solid steel with a high-gloss enamel finish. It has five gas burners and three separate oven compartments, including a top broiler. In five finishes. \$5,899; [aga-ranges.com](#)



BRASS-TRIMMED

This stately range, hand assembled in France, comes with four high-heat burners ringing one larger burner in the center (shown) or a classic French top. One gas oven and one electric come standard. Trim choices include brass, chrome, and nickel, as well as stainless steel. In 24 porcelain-enamel colors. \$7,800; [frenchranges.com](#)