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## **Energy Efficient Kitchens**

Today's Energy Star Appliances enable homeowners to do more while using less fuel and water. The better performance of cook tops, dishwashers and refrigerators means that the homeowner reduces both his utility bills and his contribution to green house gas emissions. However, the energy efficient components of appliances are not usually visible. The certification merely means that the higher the energy efficiency rating, the better the product is constructed. Only the top 25% of energy efficient appliances get an Energy Star Certification, but these are the ones to buy. Rebates and tax credits also help to offset the 10-15% higher initial cost for these appliances. Energy savings will show up on the utility bill for the life of the appliance.

An excellent example of improved efficiency is a 2008 refrigerator that uses less than 500 kilowatts of electricity annually. In comparison, a pre- 1990 refrigerator consumed 1500 kilowatts per annum. Selecting the right refrigerator becomes very important when you consider that the refrigerator accounts for 10-15% of the total household energy load as it runs twenty four hours a day, seven days a week. If your refrigerator is more than twelve years old, do not feel guilty about replacing it. As much as 95% of the components of a refrigerator can be recycled, so do not move this energy hog to the garage; call the recycler! Your energy bills will reflect a significant savings as today's models use 40% less energy than the ones purchased just five years ago! When you select a new refrigerator remember that side-by –side models use the most energy. A top freezer is more efficient than a bottom freezer; and a chest freezer is 25% more efficient than an upright model. Refrigerators with exterior ice dispensers use 20% more energy than those with interior ice dispensers. The two most energy efficient refrigerator brands on today's market are Sun Frost and Equator Conserv. As you plan your kitchen layout, do not position the refrigerator next to the dishwasher or the oven unless you add more insulation to the cabinetry.

Many cooks prefer gas stoves to electric stoves because of the ease of incremental adjustments in the cooking temperature. Gas is also more efficient for cooking than electricity. However, the most efficient cooking surface uses the principle of induction where rapidly spinning magnets mounted beneath a glass cook top can heat water to boiling in 15 seconds! JennAire and Thermador induction cook tops range in price from \$1900 to \$3500.



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Newer dishwashers are quieter and use less water (3.5 gallons versus 12 gallons) than models five years old. Some dishwashers have an internal water heater that allows you to turn down the house hot water heater temperature to 120°F.

Reducing your energy consumption is the most essential step you can take to protect the environment, and the kitchen is the best place to start.

For more ideas on green kitchen design, refer to [Good Green Kitchens](#) by Jennifer Roberts.

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