

All-star Appliances & kitchen gear

We culled a year's worth of testing for models that blend performance, value, and brand reliability. You'll also find Select Ratings with top choices from our latest tests of coffeemakers, toasters and toaster ovens, and kitchen knives (see page 40). Models within groups are listed in performance order, and prices for dishwashers, dryers, ranges, refrigerators, and washers are for models with a white finish.



GE JGBP35SEJSS
(white version: JGBP35WEJ[VVV])

GAS RANGES

Hotpoint
RGB745VEH[VVV], \$550

GE
JGBP35WEJ[VVV], \$800

GE
JGBP85WEJ[VVV], \$850

Frigidaire Gallery
GLGF386D[S], \$1,000

The Hotpoint, a CR Best Buy, is the best value. Both GEs offer stainless trim; the Frigidaire adds convection.

Ranges

ELECTRIC SMOOTHTOPS

Kenmore
(Sears) 9641 [2], \$750

Frigidaire Gallery
GLEF369D[S], \$700

Kenmore
(Sears) 9611 [2], \$580

GE
JBP84TK[VVV], \$1,100

All except the GE are CR Best Buys. The Kenmore 9641 [2] was fastest at cooktop heating; the GE offers a convection mode.

ELECTRIC-COIL RANGES

Kenmore
(Sears) 9421 [2], \$530

Hotpoint
RB757WH[VVV], \$350

Both cook capably. The Hotpoint, a CR Best Buy, gives up some broiling performance for a low price.

Vacuum cleaners

UPRIGHT VACUUMS

Kenmore
(Sears) Progressive 35922, \$300

Hoover WindTunnel 2
U8311-900, \$250

Kenmore
(Sears) Progressive 36932, \$300

Eureka Boss SmartVac
Ultra 4870, \$150

Hoover WindTunnel
Bagless U5753-900, \$160

The Kenmore 35922 and Eureka are CR Best Buys; the Hoovers were easiest to push and pull. The Kenmore 36932 and Hoover U5753-900 are bagless models.

LIGHTER UPRIGHTS

Hoover Tempo Widepath
U5140-900, \$70

Hoover EmPower
U5262-910, \$100

Both weigh less than 20 pounds. The U5140-900, a CR Best Buy, is better for carpet cleaning; the U5262-910 is a bagless model.

CANISTER VACUUMS

Kenmore
(Sears) Progressive 27514, \$300

Hoover WindTunnel
Bagless S3765-040, \$180

Both are capable on carpets and floors. The Kenmore offers better handling and pet-hair pickup.



Hoover Tempo Widepath
U5140-900

can hold five discs. All models in the Ratings except the Onkyo have a player that converts video to pseudo-HD.

Playback format. Some new players bundled with HTIB systems can convert a regular DVD's signal to pseudo-HD. A few offer Dolby and DTS surround formats that drive 6.1 or 7.1 systems. Some pricier models can play multichannel DVD-Audio and SACD music discs in their original, high-resolution format.

Media sources. Some systems have a connection for an iPod or a USB port. And some have a tuner that can be used with XM or Sirius satellite-radio services.

CR Quick Recommendations

All rated models are solid performers and easy to set up. All are 5.1 systems, with five speakers and a subwoofer, except for the Onkyo, a 7.1 system.

QUICK PICKS

For top sound and features:

1 Onkyo \$450

The Onkyo has excellent sound and a notable feature list, including a variety of connectivity options and the best equalizer controls among the systems tested. It automatically calibrates the system to your room for better sound. It's the only model tested that includes a tuner for both XM and Sirius satellite-radio services. But it lacks a DVD player.

Best value:

4 RCA \$190, CR Best Buy

This system has excellent sound and a five-disc player. A USB port lets you access music and photos on a flash drive or MP3 player. But it's not XM-ready and has limited connectivity options.

If you want a model with a DVD player:

2 Sony \$400

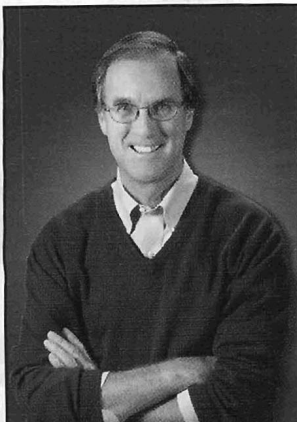
3 JVC \$400

Both have excellent sound. The Sony includes a five-disc player, is XM-ready, and automatically calibrates the system for better sound. The JVC has an integrated one-disc player, a USB port, and an iPod dock, and it is XM-ready.

If you need wireless capability:

5 Sony \$345

The Sony comes with the accessories you need to connect the rear speakers wirelessly. Its sound quality was very good, and it includes a minijack for an MP3 player.



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Refrigerators

TOP-FREEZER MODELS

Frigidaire Gallery
GLRT183TD[W], \$550 (30-inch)

Frigidaire
FRT18S6A[W], \$550 (30-inch)

Whirlpool
ET1FTEXS[Q], \$850 (33-inch)

Whirlpool
ET1FHXTM[Q], \$750 (33-inch)

Hotpoint
HTS22GBP[WW], \$650 (33-inch)

Among 30-inch-wide models, the Frigidaire FRT18S6A[W] has slightly more refrigerator space. Among 33-inch-wide models, the Whirlpool ET1FTEXS[Q] proved quietest, and the ET1FHXTM[Q] includes a water dispenser. The Hotpoint is a CR Best Buy.

BOTTOM-FREEZER MODELS

Amana
ABB1921DE[W], \$850 (30-inch)

Amana
ABB2221FE[W], \$950 (33-inch)

LG
LFD22860[SW], \$1,700 (33-inch)

GE Profile
PFS22MIS[WW], \$1,600 (33-inch)

Amana
AFD2535DE[W], \$1,700 (36-inch)

Maytag Ice₂O
MFI2568AE[W], \$2,200 (36-inch)

Maytag
MFC2061HE[W], \$2,250 (36-inch)

The 30-inch-wide Amana is a CR Best Buy. Among 33-inch-wide models, the Amana scored highest, and the LG and GE have French doors. All three 36-inch-wide models have French doors. The Amana is roomiest, and the Maytag Ice₂O has an outside ice-and-water dispenser. The MFC2061HE[W] has cabinet-depth styling; true built-ins are shallower and pricier, and have been repair-prone as a group.

SIDE-BY-SIDE MODELS

Whirlpool ED2GHEXN[Q], \$950 (33-inch)

Amana ASD2627KE[W], \$1,350 (36-inch)

GE
GSH25JFT[WW], \$1,100 (36-inch)

Whirlpool Gold
GC3SHEXN[Q], \$2,300 (36-inch)

The 33-inch-wide Whirlpool is roomier than some wider models. Among 36-inch-wide models, the Amana and GE are CR Best Buys. The Whirlpool adds cabinet-depth styling for a built-in look; true built-in models are shallower and pricier, and have been repair-prone as a group in our surveys.



Frigidaire Gallery GLRT183TD

GE GSH25JFT



LG LFD22860

Wet/dry vacuums

LARGE MODELS

Craftsman
(Sears) 17762, \$110

Ridgid
Pro Utility Vac
WD1850, \$150

The Craftsman, a CR Best Buy, weighs less and held 14 gallons. The Ridgid held 11.5 gallons and excelled in our dust-emissions tests. Like all Ridgid models, it's sold mostly at Home Depot.

MEDIUM-SIZED MODELS

Ridgid
WD1450, \$100

The Ridgid, a CR Best Buy, was the best of this size and held the most (10.5 gallons).

SMALL MODELS

Craftsman
(Sears) 17742, \$60

Ridgid
Stor-N-Go
WD5500, \$100

Between these two vacs, the Craftsman performed better in our wet-pickup tests and held 6.5 gallons. The Ridgid held less in our tests (3 gallons), but proved better for picking up dry debris.

MINISIZED MODELS

Ridgid
Pro Pack WD4550, \$100

The stackable Ridgid trades pickup capacity (just 2.5 gallons in our tests) for neat, compact storage.

Washers & dryers



FRONT-LOADING WASHERS

Bosch
Nexxt 500 Series
WFM3301UC, \$1,100

LG
WVM0642H[W], \$1,000

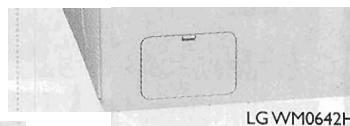
Both outperform the latest high-efficiency top-loading machines, which often cost the same or more. The Bosch held less but offers higher efficiency.

DRYERS

GE
DBVH512EF[WW], \$700

GE
Profile DPSE810EG[WT], \$600

Both electric models have a moisture sensor, which accurately gauges when laundry is dry and shuts off the dryer. The DBVH512EF[WW] is quieter; its gas equivalent is the DBVH512GE[WW]. The Profile has a porcelain lid and stainless drum; its gas equivalent is the DPSE810GG[].



LG WVM0642H

Cooktops & wall ovens

30-INCH-WIDE ELECTRIC COOKTOPS

Kenmore
(Sears) 4273[2], \$600

Maytag
MECS430BD[W], \$570

Both are top-scoring models. The Kenmore, a CR Best Buy, has a higher-watt element with slightly faster heating.

36-INCH-WIDE GAS COOKTOPS

GE
JGP975WEK[WW], \$1,200

Maytag
MGC6536BD[W], \$720

GE
JGP637WEJ[WW], \$650

These models offer the quick response and visual confirmation of a flame. The GE JGP975WEK[WW] has higher-powered burners and, like the Maytag, continuous grates; the lower-priced Maytag and GE JGP637WEJ[WW] are CR Best Buys.



GE JGP975WEK

30-INCH-WIDE ELECTRIC WALL OVENS

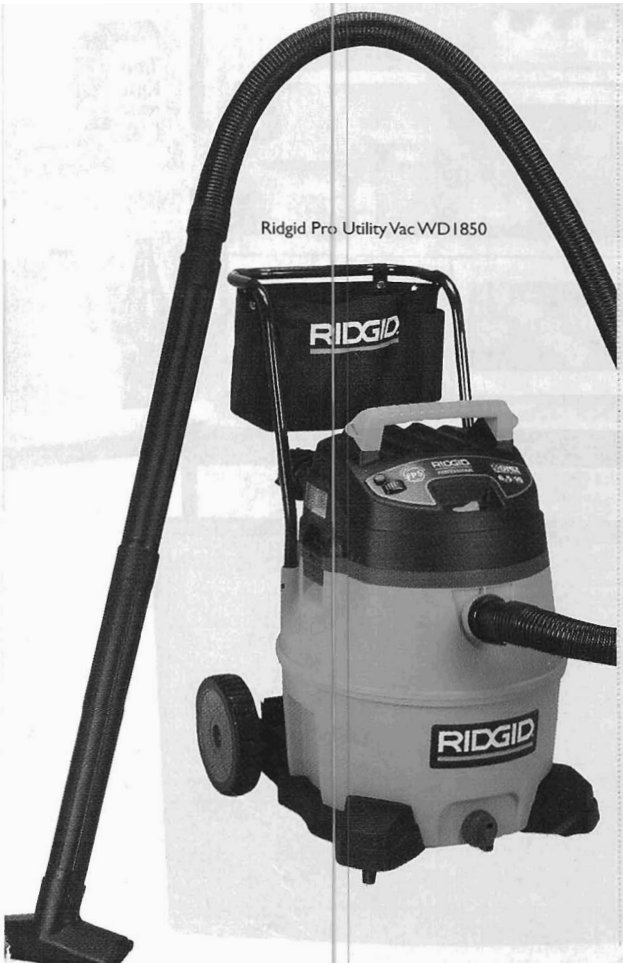
GE Profile
JT915WF[WW], \$1,500

KitchenAid Superba
KEBC107K[WH], \$1,600

Frigidaire Gallery
GLEB30S9F[S], \$1,400

All three of these models have a convection mode and a covered bake element; the KitchenAid has a larger oven cavity—a plus if you cook for a crowd.

Ridgid Pro Utility Vac WD1850



Dishwashers

BASIC MODELS

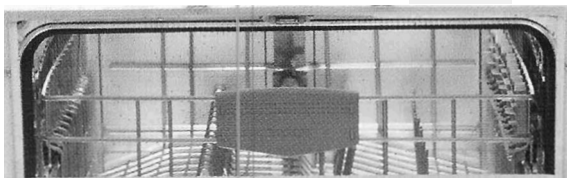
Whirlpool
DU1100XTP[Q], \$450

GE
GLD4600N[VWV], \$460

Frigidaire Gallery
GLD4355RF[S], \$500

Maytag
MDB4651AW[W], \$400

The Whirlpool was tops in washing and has flatware slots, as does the GE. The Frigidaire adds adjustable racks and tines; the Maytag trades some features for a lower price.



WELL-EQUIPPED MODELS

Kenmore
(Sears) 1374[2], \$700

Kenmore
(Sears) 1373[2], \$640

Bosch
SHE45CO[2]UC, \$700

All three blend performance and flexible loading features. Both Kenmores are CR Best Buys; the 1374[2] is quieter. The Bosch is also quiet and has a stainless-steel tub backed by a long warranty, though you must occasionally wash this model's filter by hand.

Microwave ovens

OVER-THE-RANGE MODELS

LG
LMV2053[SB], \$300

Kenmore
(Sears) Elite 8083[9], \$530

Whirlpool
Gold GH4155XP[B], \$430

All offer stainless trim. The LG is a CR Best Buy; the Kenmore adds space using a sliding tray that keeps plates moving for even cooking. While all over-the-range ovens also offer some exhaust venting, none vented as effectively as range hoods in our tests.

MIDSIZED COUNTERTOP MODELS

Kenmore
(Sears) 6325[2], \$120

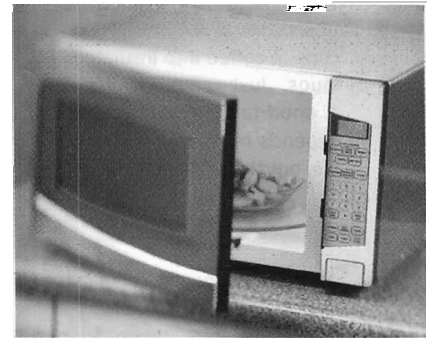
The Kenmore, a CR Best Buy, was among the top-scoring models and includes detailed prompts as well as a sensor that shuts off the oven when food is done.

LARGE COUNTERTOP MODELS

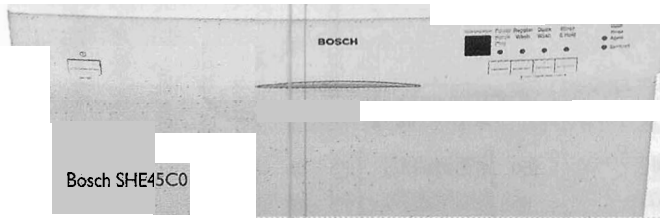
GE
Profile JES2251S[JSS], \$240

GE
JE1460[B]F, \$130

Both have sensors and detailed prompts. The Profile is roomier and offers stainless trim; the JE1460[B]F is a CR Best Buy.



GE Profile JES2251S



Bosch SHE45CO

Gas grills

MEDIUM-SIZED GRILLS (room for 24 burgers)

Blue Ember
by Fiesta FG50069-U401
(Home Depot), \$450

Char-Broil
463268007 (Lowe's), \$300

Kenmore
(Sears) 16233, \$400

The Blue Ember, a CR Best Buy, offers lots of shelf space, side and rotisserie burners, and a smoker box. The Char-Broil, also a CR Best Buy, and Kenmore are mostly stainless-steel and have long-warranty burners.

LARGE GRILLS

(room for 30-plus burgers)

Kenmore (Sears) 16237, \$800

Our top-scoring large grill, the Kenmore is mostly stainless steel and includes long-warranty burners, a side burner, and coated cast-iron grates.

PORTABLE GRILLS

(room for about 15 burgers)

Weber Q
396001, \$180

The Weber excelled at grilling and cooking food evenly, outperforming other portable and small models. A cart and an adapter for a larger tank cost about \$100.



Blue Ember
FG50069-U401

SELECT. RANKING

• Availability Most models at stores through December 2007.

● Excellent
● Very good
● Good
● Fair
● Poor

Best choices from our tests of 37 coffeemakers, 35 toasters and toaster ovens, and 40 knife sets.

Coffeemakers

Some coffeemakers cost \$100 and up, but the Black & Decker SmartBrews cost much less. Like your java just so? The Mr. Coffee lets you adjust brew strength. Most models we tested make up to 8 or 12 cups at a time. The Melitta Take 2 ME2TM, \$25, can dispense one or two cups of coffee into insulated mugs. Just remember that a good-tasting cup of joe depends mostly on the coffee, not the coffeemaker.



Melitta Take 2 ME2TM

In performance order. Blue key numbers indicate Quick Picks.

Key number	Brand & model	Price	Overall score	Test results					Features		
				Convenience	Carafe handling	Programmable	Thermal carafe/mug	Brew-strength control	Dispenser style		
CR BEST BUY 1	Black & Decker SmartBrew DCM2500	\$35	91	●	●	●	●	●			
CR BEST BUY 2	Black & Decker SmartBrew DCM2000	25	88	●	●	●	●	●			
3	Mr. Coffee FTX25	50	83	●	●	●	●	●			
CR BEST BUY 4	Melitta Take 2 ME2TM	25	78	●	●	●	●	●			
5	Hamilton Beach BrewStation 47114	50	74	●	●	●	●	●			

1) To-go model.

Toasters/toaster ovens

Quality toasters range from full-featured to basic. The Oster has two adjustable slots; settings for bagels, waffles, and pastries; and a removable crumb tray. The Proctor Silex offers fine performance without the frills; the Braun has a stylish, pro look.



Toaster ovens can also bake, broil, and roast. Top picks include the T-Fal Avante Elite Convection Toaster Oven, \$100, which toasts up to six slices and has touchpad controls, and the Rival TO600, \$55, which excels at baking.

Proctor Silex Cool Touch

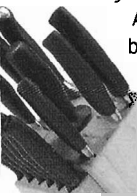
In performance order. Blue key numbers indicate Quick Picks.

Key number	Brand & model	Price	Overall score	Test results					Features		
				Toast color range	Full toast batch	Successive batches	Ease of use	One slot	Bagel setting	Plastic housing	
All models listed below are toasters.											
1	KitchenAid KTT340(WH)	\$50	82	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
2	Oster Counterforms 6335	45	80	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
CR BEST BUY 3	Proctor Silex Cool-Touch 22450	15	80	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
4	Krups FEM2B	60	80	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
5	Braun Impressions HT600	60	72	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	

Kitchen knives

Forged-steel knives tend to be sturdier and less likely to bend than stamped-steel knives. The higher price of the Wüsthof Trident set buys you superb performance and eight knives, the most among the forged sets shown here. The Tramontina is the least-expensive forged set, but it includes only three knives.

Among the models fitted with stamped blades, the Chicago Cutlery and Oxo sets deliver the greatest value. The low-maintenance blades on the Cutco Salad Mates eliminate the regular honing and periodic sharpening that most knives require.



Oxo Good Grips

In performance order. Blue key numbers indicate Quick Picks.

Key number	Brand & model	Price	Overall score	Test results			Features		
				Cutting performance	Handle comfort	Handle balance	Blade type	Set size (no. of knives)	Not included in set
	Wüsthof Trident Classic #8418	\$300	90	●	●	●	forged	8	santoku
	Henckels Twin Professional "S"	260	90	●	●	●	forged	7	santoku
3	Tramontina Professional L-400/03	75	87	●	●	●	forged	3	santoku, slicer
4	Mercer Genesis by Mercer M20000 30768-000	170	79	●	●	●	forged	6	santoku, slicer
CR BEST BUY 5	Chicago Cutlery Metropolitan	60	78	●	●	●	stamped	8	santoku
CR BEST BUY 6	Oxo Good Grips Professional	100	78	●	●	●	stamped	14	
7	Cutco Salad Mates	80	62	●	●	●	stamped	2	chef's, santoku, slicer

1) Low-maintenance blade.