

range hoods

Is your kitchen full of hot air? Here's how to choose the best ventilation system for your cooktop

WRITTEN BY JOHN LOECKE

Cooking produces grease, smoke, heat and steam. Without proper ventilation, these cooking byproducts can accumulate on surfaces, creating a dingy appearance. In addition, heat and steam can make the room uncomfortable while you're cooking and can also damage cabinetry finishes and tarnish a good paint job. The solution: a properly ducted ventilation system that is sized to cover all of the burners on your cooktop or range.

THREE FOR ALL

Ventilation systems are divided into three categories: updraft, downdraft and recirculating. Updraft systems, which install directly over the cooking surface, are what most people are familiar with, according to David Newton, CKD, of David Newton & Associates, a kitchen and bath design firm in Knoxville, Tennessee. These systems use a hood to gather vapors and funnel them to the outside using a blower that pushes them through a series of ducts. "Because hot air, smoke and steam rise naturally, these units are considered the most efficient," says Jim Krengel, CKD, of Kitchens by Krengel, a design firm in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Installed behind the cooking surface or integrated into the cooktop, downdraft systems use a fan to pull cooking vapors horizontally across burners. Smoke and steam are evacuated through an exhaust duct and outside the home. "Homeowners who want their cooking surface located in an island often opt for these because they don't want anything overhead obstructing their view," says Krengel. Of course, downdraft units, by nature of their design, can be less effective when cooking with deep pots and pans, according to Newton. Look for units that rise 10 inches above the cooktop.

Recirculating designs, also called ductless systems, capture smoke and steam as they rise. The air then passes through a filter (often carbon) and is then pumped back into the room. While these units (often built into an over-the-range microwave) are capable of removing most cooking odors, they do not have the ability to remove heat and steam and are thus not recommended for use in kitchens that receive heavy use. "At best they remove odors, but only if you clean the filters regularly," says Newton.



BOGART BY ZEPHYR

Created by renowned industrial designer David Lewis, the Bogart updraft hood by Zephyr is a powerful ventilation system housed in a contemporary stainless steel and glass hood that blends beautifully with any decor. Available in 36- and 42-inch configurations, the Bogart features a 600-CFM internal blower and an innovative Control Ball that provides simple access to all of the unit's functions: Push the ball to the left for different fan speeds; push it right for lighting options. \$2,700. 877-937-4975; www.zephyronline.com.