



"Your Neighborhood Appliance Specialists"

MAJOR APPLIANCE MAILBOX

Q. I am designing a new kitchen and want to have a cooktop. Are gas cooktops or electric cooktops best?

Signed—Torn in Toledo



A. When it comes to cooktops, cooks have been asking this question for years. Each option has distinct benefits so it's important to pick the one that meets your needs and cooking habits.

The first step when shopping for a cooktop is to decide what type of power source you need, or in the case of a new kitchen, want. Design and cooking performance are key factors.

ELECTRIC COOKTOPS

Electric ceramic glass cooktops have a smooth, sleek surface that are easy to clean because food and grease can't get trapped in the grates covering the burners and crevices found on gas cooktops. These cooktop surfaces can also withstand intense heat without cracking or chipping.

Electric cooktops tend to heat up faster and cook better on low heat, ideal for braising meat, melting butter or simmering sauces.

GAS COOKTOPS

If you decide to go with gas, look for continuous grates. Continuous grates allow you to slide those heavy pots and pans from one burner to another, giving you the flexibility to place pots and pans anywhere on the cooktop surface. Look for grates that are dishwasher-safe making them very easy to clean.

Also look for sealed burners. This will make clean-up on your gas cooktop easier by preventing food from dropping down into the burner. It will also create a more even, stable flame for efficient cooking.

If you enjoy grilling year-round, many gas cooktops have grill options – check them out. Be sure to consider how the grill smoke will be vented away.

A HELPFUL APPLIANCE HINT

Keeping your cooktop clean

Be it gas or electric, one thing is sure: your cooktop will be dripped-on and spilled-over on a daily basis and keeping it clean can be a challenge. Here are some helpful tips to keep your cooktop in tiptop shape:

To clean the control panel, spray a glass cleaner on a soft cloth or sponge — do not spray directly on the panel.

To clean the control knobs, turn them to off and pull straight away from the control panel. Wash, rinse and dry thoroughly — do not soak the knobs or place them in a dishwasher.

For stainless steel surfaces, if you don't have stainless steel cleaner and polish on hand, a simple liquid detergent or all-purpose cleaner will do the trick. Use a lint-free cloth to dry.

Remember to clean food spills containing acids, such as vinegar and tomato, as soon as the cooktop is cool as these spills may affect the finish. Be sure to check your Use & Care guide for additional tips on how to best clean your particular cooktop to prevent scratches, pitting and abrasions.

MYTHBUSTERS! **Are these Household Myths and Mysteries of Summer...** **TRUE or FALSE?**



Myth/Mystery: Putting Out a Fake Owl Will Keep Away Birds

Answer: **FALSE**

Whether it's inflatable, hard plastic, or wood, an owl in the window won't permanently deter birds. "They quickly realize those owls aren't real," says Roger Lederer, professor emeritus of biological sciences at California State University, in Chico, and owner of Ornithology.com. A fake owl *could* discourage birds from trying to kamikaze through the glass, but that's only because the owl is covering it, Lederer says: "An Elvis doll would probably be just as effective."

Myth/Mystery: Dusting Houseplants Is Crucial or They Can't Breathe

Answer: Partially **TRUE**

Over time dust can block plants' pores, which allow water vapor to escape (transpiration) and food production to occur (photosynthesis). Don't feel obliged to take a feather duster to your philodendron every time you wipe down the TV screen, but most houseplants do benefit from having their leaves cleaned once or twice a year, says David Ellis of the American Horticultural Society. He suggests wiping the tops and bottoms of broad-leaved plants with a damp cloth or sponge. Even quicker: Pop them under a soft shower, or spray them gently with the garden hose.

Myth/Mystery: Leaving Grass Clippings on the Lawn After Mowing Is Harmful

Answer: **FALSE**

In fact, this process, called grass cycling, allows the nutrients to return to the soil, says turfgrass science professor Trey Rogers. However, if you've neglected the lawn for months, then suddenly have an Edward Scissorhands moment, you could have too much of a good thing. "If the grass is really tall and you leave large clumps," says Rogers, "they won't work their way down to the ground, and there's a good chance they'll smother the turf."

Myth/Mystery: Watering the Lawn in the Midday Sun Burns the Grass

Answer: **FALSE**

Burning occurs when water acts as a magnifying glass. On a normal (not boggy) lawn, the summer midday sun will evaporate moisture too quickly for that, says Trey Rogers, professor of turfgrass science at Michigan State University, in East Lansing. What *will* get singed is your wallet: Up to 60 percent of the water you use will be lost through evaporation. "You're fighting Mother Nature—the wind and the sun," says Rogers. The best time to water? Between 5am. and 9am. The sun will dry the grass by late morning, reducing the potential for fungal diseases that can develop when water sits too long on grass—which is why watering a lawn at night isn't a good idea.

Myth/Mystery: Cutting the Grass as Short as You Can Means You Have to Mow It Less Often

Answer: **TRUE... only because if you cut it too short, you'll kill it**

"You're taking away the leaf, which is the plant's food factory," explains John Buechner, the Marlboro, New Jersey-based director of technical services for lawn-service provider, Lawn Doctor. The plant will compensate by diverting energy from growing roots to regrowing the leaf. What should you do? When you mow, never cut off more than one-third of the blades. This ensures that the grass is long enough to shade the soil and keep its temperature down, allowing the roots to grow deeper and increasing drought tolerance. Plus, "a healthy lawn that's well nourished and thick is the best defense against weeds," says Buechner.

MORE MYTHBUSTERS!

**...and these actually have something to do with appliances!
Do you know if these are TRUE or FALSE?**



Myth/Mystery: Standing in Front of a Running Microwave Oven Will Give You Cancer

Answer: **FALSE...probably**

Despite a few studies suggesting possible cause for concern, according to a Food and Drug Administration spokesperson, “there are no established adverse health effects, including cancer, from using or standing in front of a standard microwave oven.” The non-ionizing radiation that ovens use to change the chemical structure of food is different from the ionizing radiation that causes cells in the body to mutate. Research is ongoing, though, so to be safe, the FDA advises, don’t stand directly in front of a microwave “for long periods of time” while it’s working. If you’re standing there watching last night’s kung pao chicken reheat, you’re much more likely to die of boredom.

Myth/Mystery: Always Clean the Lint Trap Before Using the Clothes Dryer

Answer: **TRUE**

The lint filter covers an exhaust port. If it's blocked with a layer of fuzz—and all it takes is a load of towels to make one—the moist air can't get out. It's a tremendous waste of energy, because it takes longer for clothes to dry, and there's a remote possibility of fire. Also, residue from dryer sheets and detergent can decrease performance by forming an invisible layer on the trap, says Jill Notini of the Association of Home Appliance Manufacturers. She suggests taking a nylon brush and hot, soapy water to the screen regularly.

Myth/Mystery: Keeping the Refrigerator Door Open Will Spoil the Food Inside

Answer: **FALSE**

Well, I guess it is kind of true, but you'd have to stand there pondering for hours or days. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, food can sit in the ‘Danger Zone’—between 40 and 140 degrees Fahrenheit—for two hours before it needs discarding, but "opening the refrigerator door for a short period will not cause the temperature to rise significantly," says Patty Davis, information officer for the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. Mostly it's an energy waster. When you allow the cold air to escape, it tells the compressor to cycle on, and that takes more electricity.

Myth/Mystery: Leaving Dishes in the Sink Will Make Them Dirtier

Answer: **TRUE**

Experts say all those bits of food are like Thanksgiving dinner to germs. And as they eat, they multiply. "Water is an ideal medium for bacteria to grow in," says Joseph Rubino, director of microbiology at Lysol -maker Reckitt Benckiser, in Montvale, New Jersey. "Plus, the bacteria spread when the water from the sink splashes onto the counter." If you're going to soak dishes, Rubino recommends, limit it to an hour or two. If you need more time to muster up the energy, let dishes sit without water—but good luck chiseling that dried oatmeal out of the bowls three days later.

Protect Yourself from Consumer Fraud!



Here is some sound consumer financial advice:

- When ordering checks have only your initials (instead of first name) and last name put on them. An identity thief will not know how you sign your checks but your bank will.
- Do not sign the back of your credit cards. Instead, put ‘PHOTO ID REQUIRED.’
- When writing checks to pay your credit card bill, DO NOT put the complete account number on the memo line. Instead, just put the last four numbers.

**Don't get
ripped off!**

Did You Know?

Some Fun Facts About:

Horseradish and Pumpkins

- The International Herb Association has announced that 2011 is officially the Year of the Horseradish. (Did you even know horseradish was an herb?!?!?)
- Illinois leads the country in the production of pumpkins and horseradish.
- Illinois produces 80% of the world's horseradish.
- Illinois accounts for 40% of the United States' pumpkin production.
- Millions of acres of land are set aside for corn production each year, while only about 1500 acres of Illinois land are farmed to produce the horseradish crop.
- 85% of the world's canned pumpkin comes from a single processing plant in Morton, IL

ENERGY TIP

A few minutes of moderate exercise – even indoors in an office environment - can provide a more powerful afternoon energy boost than reaching for a sugary-sweet candy bar or a soda loaded with caffeine.

GRILLING TIME



A grill has three basic levels of heat. Although not as exacting as the oven in your kitchen the approximate temperatures are:

HIGH HEAT: 500°F

MEDIUM HEAT: 400°F

LOW HEAT: 300°F

Many 'seasoned' grillers like to test the temperatures of their grills by 'feel.' Place your open palm five inches above the grill grate. The fire is...

HIGH HEAT if you have to move your hand in 2 seconds

MEDIUM HEAT if you have to move your hand in 5 seconds

LOW HEAT if you have to move your hand in 10 seconds

HAPPY GRILLING!!!!
