

Smart Appliances Think for You

Families come in various shapes and sizes, but the one constant in many homes is that everyone in the family is busy. Work, school, lessons, and anything else you can think of takes up a good chunk of waking hours. In the kitchen, it's often about making the most out of what little time you have to cook. Luckily appliances are getting faster and smarter to help you maximize your time. The refrigerator and oven seem to be the main beneficiaries of these technological advances, although products that store and make beverages have also received some help as well.

Hot Tech

It appears that ovens are beginning to adhere to that old business adage, "Work smart, not just hard." The latest batch of ovens coming to a kitchen near you have high IQ features, like remote programming and display screens that offer cooking tips. Some of them can even cook your food up to 90 percent faster than traditional ovens. Now if only they could convince your kids to eat their broccoli.



TMIO Connect Io Intelligent Oven

Cost: \$7,495

The Connect Io might be the first oven that takes cell phone calls. It uses remote connectivity based on NASA space technology that allows you to operate it using the Internet or even your cell phone. Whichever browser you use, you can view the oven's controls and settings in real time. There is also built-in refrigeration to ensure your food stays fresh until you give the Connect Io cooking instructions from a remote location. You can operate this 30-inch, double wall oven from your kitchen too, but what fun would that be?



TurboChef Speedcook Oven

Cost: \$7,495

The 30-inch Speedcook double wall oven is as fast as a slow cooker is slow. Its claim to fame is being able to prepare meals up to 15 times faster than conventional ovens, all while preserving your food's flavor and quality. It also includes a digital display to calculate cook times—a helpful feature, since your Fannie Farmer cookbook doesn't have recipes adjusted for the Speedcook.

Cold Tech

The 21st-century refrigerator is quickly evolving into the entertainment and command center of the kitchen. Integrating a television into the fridge door was the first new trait of the modern fridge, but that turned out to be just the tip of the icebox. Here are two fridges that entertain, inform and talk.



LG TV Refrigerator (LSC27990TT)

Cost: \$3,499 to \$3,699

LG has been producing television refrigerators for the past couple of years, and their latest model has the biggest TV screen to date, with a 15-inch LCD screen that can also function as a DVD player and FM radio. This refrigerator's other feature is a weather and information center, which can tell you the temperature inside and outside and even provide a five-day forecast. Other amenities include a calendar, alarm clock, recipe finder, and the ability to store digital photos. Available in stainless steel, this side-by-side, 26.2-cubic foot refrigerator also keeps your food cold.



Samsung Refrigerator with Wireless ICE Pad

Cost: \$3,499

This 26-cubic foot side-by-side refrigerator has a detachable, 10.4-inch LCD screen called the ICE (interactive control entertainment) pad. It can be used as a television, but this thin touch screen is hardly one dimensional. The ICE pad allows you to record voice messages for family members, and with help from a stylus pen, you can leave hand-written messages on the LCD screen. Using the touch screen, you can inventory what's in the fridge and set reminders to tell you when products will expire. If only it could prevent certain family members from drinking out of the milk container, you'd be all set.

Grape Expectations

How can you tell a casual wine drinker from a full fledged wine enthusiast? Look in their kitchen, of course. If they own a wine fridge, you've found an oenophile. For the truly obsessed connoisseurs of fermented grape juice, these two high-tech products will surely take a passion for wine to the next level.



GE Monogram Wine Vault

Cost: \$25,000

Rest assured, this is only for the serious (and seriously loaded) wine lover. From the outside, the wine vault looks like it belongs in a bank with its stainless steel frame. Inside, a 3,000 Btu cooling system keeps the vault at 55 degrees Fahrenheit

with a consistent humidity level, while the redwood racks can hold between 1,031 and 1,100 bottles of wine, depending on which design you choose. But what truly makes the wine vault high tech is its electronic inventory system. Using a 15-inch touch screen attached to the outside of the vault, you can scan bar codes, create labels and manage your supply of wine.



Provina WinePod

Cost: \$3,499

If buying wine just doesn't do it for you anymore, consider the WinePod, a device that makes wine-making easy and vineyard free. The WinePod ferments, presses and ages frozen grapes (which can be purchased through Provina) to create four to five cases of wine per batch. This wine-making machine transmits data wirelessly to your computer, and with the WinePod's software, you can monitor each batch you make. This software also helps you choose the appropriate grapes, and gives instructions for making various types of wine. Unfortunately, the WinePod is currently sold out. However, the next round of WinePods should be available in May, and you can sign up online to reserve one.