

# naturalLiving

Fall/Winter 2023

your home. your world.

## Natural Gas: Stable, Secure and Sustainable



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**Southeast Gas**

# INSIDE



08

## IN EVERY ISSUE

### naturalNews

#### 03 Say goodbye to summer

Prepare your home now for the coming winter months

### naturallyBetter

#### 08 Creating a dream kitchen

Consumers look for high tech and sustainable kitchen solutions

### naturalFit

#### 12 Deck the halls

Budget-friendly strategies for decorating your home like a pro

### naturalChoice

#### 15 The forgotten appliance

Natural gas dryers: the smart choice for the modern home

### naturallyGood

#### 16 Apple Cider Pork Chops

Stovetop Steam-Fried Green Beans and Mushrooms

## FEATURE

### 04 Clean energy

Natural gas is good for the environment – and more cost effective, too



12

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# Say goodbye to summer

Prepare your home now for the coming winter months

By Tonya McMurray

**T**he advent of crisp fall days is a reminder that it's time to prepare for the coming winter months. Take time now for preventative maintenance that will save energy and prevent potential damage from winter storms.

Before freezing weather sets in, use foam rubber sleeves to insulate pipes along outside walls or in unheated areas such as basements and crawlspaces. According to HomeAdvisor®, an online service that connects homeowners to local service professionals, a burst pipe can cost around \$500 to repair and can cause up to \$3,000 in additional damage.

Consider investing in a natural gas generator to provide energy during power outages. Because natural gas is delivered to the home via underground pipelines, it is less susceptible to weather disruptions. So, a natural gas generator can provide a reliable secondary energy source for your home.

To maximize home heating, check for leaks and air drafts. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, the average U.S. home has enough leaks, holes and gaps to equal having a window open every day of the year. That can be quite costly, with the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) estimating that the average homeowner wastes about 30% of their yearly energy use due to drafts.

To prevent that energy loss, seal baseboards and window joints with caulk and use weather stripping or window film kits to seal drafty windows and doors. For added protection, replace screens on doors and windows with storm versions. The DOE estimates that storm doors can reduce energy loss by up to 50%.



## WINTER'S COMING

Because heat is one of the biggest winter energy expenses, pay particular attention to the heating system. For heating systems and fireplaces fueled by natural gas, winter preparation is fairly simple. Because natural gas burns cleanly, there is less need for chimney cleanings and equipment often requires less maintenance. However, heating equipment, fireplaces, chimneys and flues should be inspected to make sure they are operating safely and efficiently.

To maximize heating, inspect and clean heating vents and make sure there are no obstacles in front of vents to inhibit air flow.

Consider replacing a thermostat with a programmable unit to save on heating costs. According to the DOE, adjusting your thermostat by 10 to 15 degrees during the workday when no one is home can save between 5% and 15% on energy costs. Turning the thermostat down by 8 degrees when no one is home and at night can save up to \$180 a year in heating costs, according to the Alliance to Save Energy, a nonprofit, bipartisan alliance of business, government, environmental and consumer leaders.

Keeping your heat at 68 degrees Fahrenheit when people are home provides a comfortable temperature while reducing energy use. The California Energy Commission's Consumer Energy Center estimates that every degree that heat is lowered saves up to 5% in heating costs. ■



# Clean energy

Natural gas is good for the environment – and more cost effective, too

By Drew Robb

These days, there’s a lot of talk about the need for electrification. It may be a good idea in some cases, but not when it comes to home appliances.

The American Gas Association (AGA) just completed an in-depth study that compared the energy use, operating costs and carbon dioxide emissions of gas versus electric appliances. It turns out that an all-electric home is far less energy efficient, more expensive to run and worse for the environment than a home that makes abundant use of gas.

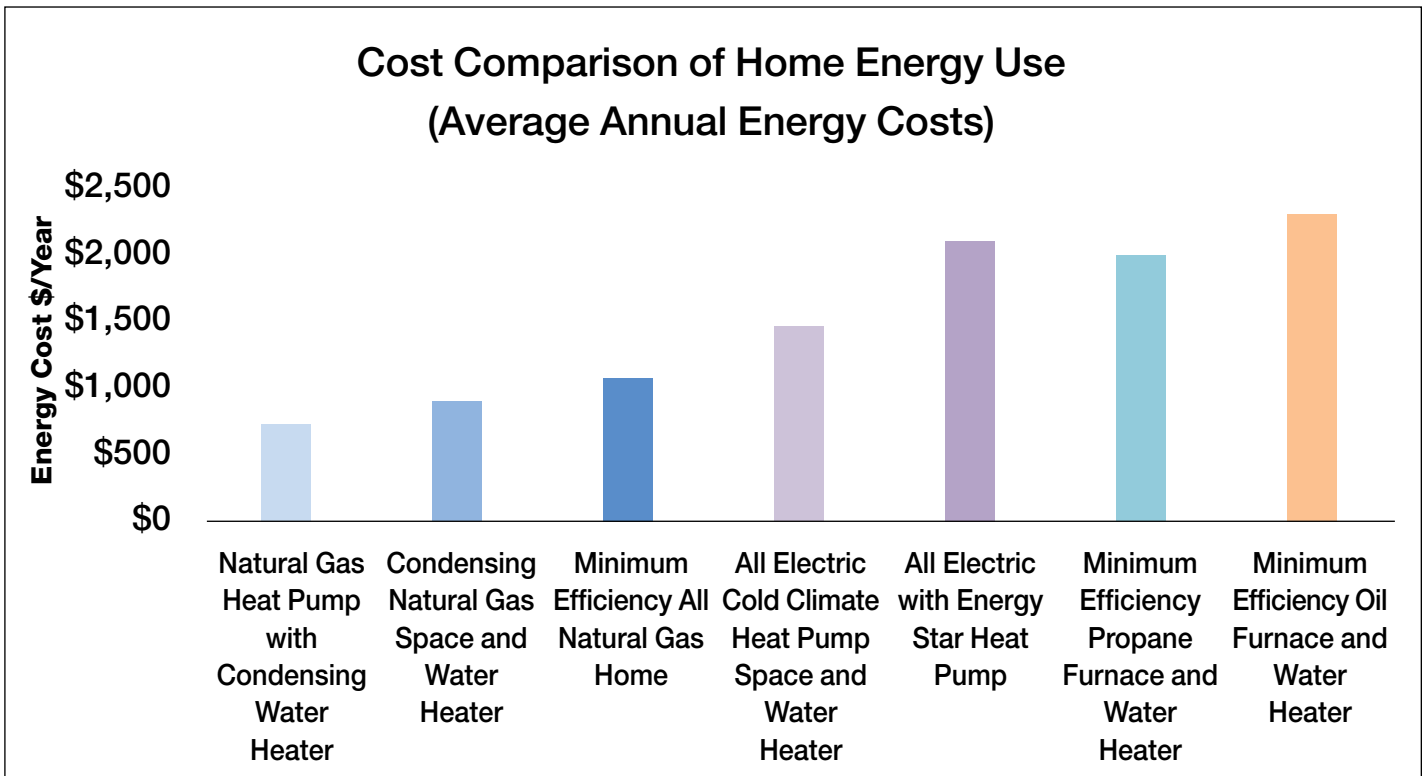
“Analysis shows that a typical new home that uses natural gas saves consumers money on energy bills and lowers greenhouse emissions (GHGs), even compared to high-efficiency, all-electric homes,” said Brendan O’Brien, AGA’s senior manager of energy analysis. “The direct use of natural gas in residential applications can significantly reduce energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions compared with electricity and fuel oil.”

## GAS IS LESS EXPENSIVE THAN ELECTRICITY

The AGA study evaluated common home appliances using natural gas, electricity, propane and heating oil. The latest high-efficiency gas appliances provided energy costs that were three or more times cheaper than oil, propane and all-electric homes using Energy Star®-rated heat pumps. Even natural gas appliances meeting only the minimum efficiency standards set by Energy Star proved to be half the cost per year to run compared to their electric equivalent.



SOURCE: AMERICAN GAS ASSOCIATION



Comparing a single-family home with a furnace, water heater, stove and dryer operated with different energy sources.

lents. Energy Star is a federal program that helps consumers, businesses and industry save money and protect the environment through the adoption of energy-efficient products and practices.

These findings are based on several data points. According to the U.S. Department of Energy, natural gas utility bills are 49% lower than comparable all-electric home energy bills, 53% lower than the oil-fueled home and 46% lower than the propane home. An all-electric home with minimum Energy Star efficiency-rated appliances would cost more than \$2,000 annually. If a cold-climate heat pump is utilized, the price drops to slightly less than \$1,500. A natural gas home, in comparison, would cost just over \$1,000 annually. If advanced high-efficiency natural gas appliances are used, such as those using condensing technology in the furnace or water heater, the annual bill drops below \$900.

**NATURAL GAS HOMES HAVE LOWER EMISSIONS**

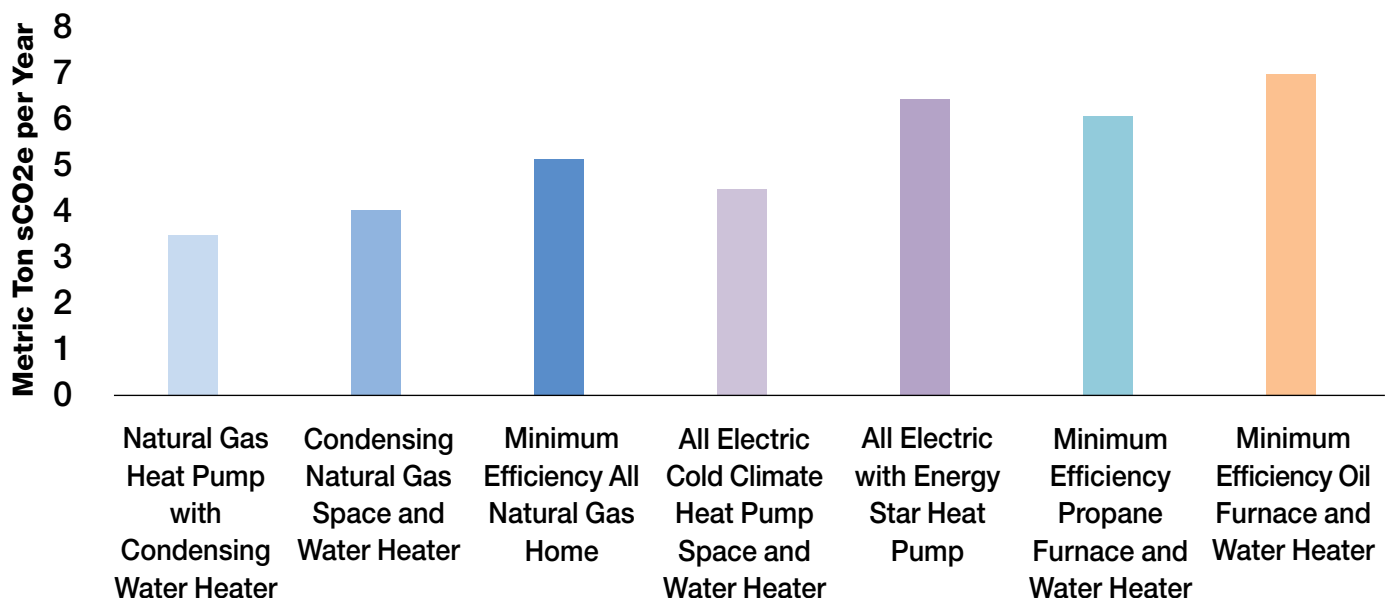
While the lower cost of natural gas is well-known, the lower GHG emissions of a natural gas home may be a surprise to some. With

the installation of high-efficiency condensing natural gas space and water heaters, natural gas homes can reach 11% lower emissions on average than homes that use advanced air-source electric heat pumps.

The AGA analysis provides a comprehensive view of efficiency and emissions associated with consumer appliances. It achieves this by taking a full-fuel-cycle approach that includes examining the energy used or lost in extraction, processing, transportation, conversion and distribution, including the generation and



**CO<sub>2</sub>e Comparison of Home Energy Use  
(Metric Tons per Year)**



Studies show that natural gas homes are better for the environment than all-electric homes.

SOURCE: AMERICAN GAS ASSOCIATION



transmission of electricity (See Sidebar: Understanding site versus source energy efficiency). Once again, natural gas came out well ahead of electric, propane and oil-fueled homes.

“Natural gas use in residential applications generates significantly less greenhouse gas emissions than electricity, oil and propane,” O’Brien said.

### **NATURAL GAS UTILITIES DEMONSTRATE ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP**

The natural gas industry has a stellar record in responding to concerns over emissions and the need to demonstrate environmental responsibility.

## **UNDERSTANDING SITE VERSUS SOURCE ENERGY EFFICIENCY**

There are a many metrics thrown around that compare the efficiency levels of natural gas and electric appliances. A distorted view can be arrived at by viewing a tiny fragment of the overall energy value cycle. It is important to take all factors into account – from the point of extraction of natural gas or the fuel used to generate electricity all the way to the site where it is consumed. So, what is the difference between site energy efficiency and source energy efficiency?

Site energy, as the name implies, measures the energy that is used at the point of consumption. This is what shows up on the utility bill. Efficiency metrics around site energy pertain to the amount of energy that is converted to power by the appliance versus the amount that is wasted. Site energy is what you often see in efficiency ratings such as those issued by Energy Star® – a federal program that helps consumers, businesses and industry save money and protect the environment through the adoption of energy-efficient products and practices. These are extremely useful when comparing one gas appliance to another or one electric appliance to another. However,

*“With electric energy, a power plant turning fuel into electric current needs to travel all the way to your home. Energy is lost in the process of generating electricity.”*

**— John Carey, co-founder and vice president, Designer Appliances**

these ratings can sometimes be misleading when trying to compare a gas appliance to an electric appliance.

Source energy takes a much broader view. It encompasses everything from the point of extraction, or generation, all the way through transmission, storage and final delivery of energy to the consumer.

When electrical energy and electrical appliances are viewed across this entire spectrum, their levels of efficiency suffer. For every unit of energy used in a home, 2.8 units of energy need to be generated to meet this demand.

Why? Major losses occur in the electrical transmission and distribution process. This means that the electric generation and transmission process is about 35% efficient.

Natural gas, on the other hand, needs only 1.05 more units of energy than is consumed at site — i.e., virtually all the energy produced at the source is available at the site with nominal losses along the way. The source efficiency of natural gas is more than 90%.

“With electric energy, a power plant turning fuel into electric current needs to travel all the way to your home,” said John Carey, co-founder and vice president of Designer Appliances. “Energy is lost in the process of generating electricity.

Source energy, therefore, is the only fair and sensible way to compare gas versus electric efficiency. According to Energy Star, “source energy is the most equitable unit of evaluation and enables a complete assessment of



“Natural gas utilities have reduced their greenhouse gas emissions [GHGs] by 69% since 1990 and helped homeowners reduce their carbon emissions 1.2% every year,” said Karen Harbert, president and CEO of the American Gas Association.

Natural gas, then, plays an important role in meeting our nation’s GHGs reduction goals. The good news is that natural gas utilities are taking things to the next level by investing more than \$100 million to advance low- and zero-carbon technologies to protect the environment.

“Climate change is a defining challenge across the globe, and this industry and natural gas are part of the solution,” said Kim Greene, CEO, Southern Company Gas.

Improvements in natural gas efficiency coupled with the growth of

*“The most practical, realistic way to achieve a sustainable future where energy is clean – as well as safe, reliable and affordable – is to ensure it includes natural gas and the infrastructure that transports it.”*

— Kim Greene, CEO, Southern Company Gas

renewable energy have led to energy-related carbon dioxide emissions hitting 30-year lows, according to AGA. The latest developments in  
*(continued on page 14)*

energy efficiency.”

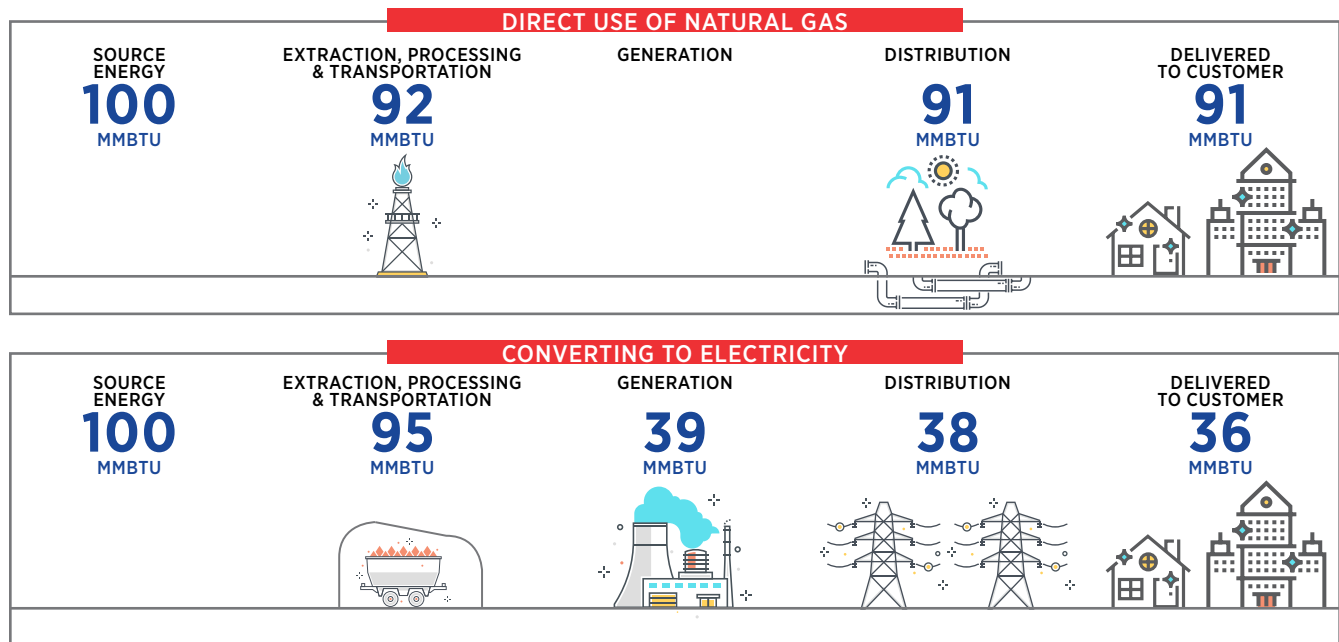
When source energy is used as a means of comparison, natural gas appliances and natural gas homes

come out as the clear winners. Bottom line: Natural gas is by far the most efficient fuel source for most home appliance applications. ■

## EFFICIENCY OF NATURAL GAS

To get a true picture of how efficient a fuel is, you need to look at the entire process from extracting the fuel to customer delivery. This illustration shows that the delivery of natural gas to the end user is almost 3 times more efficient than the process to deliver electricity.

Electricity must be generated from another fuel, such as nuclear power, coal or natural gas. But, natural gas is a primary fuel, so it does not need to be generated like electricity. The direct use of natural gas, in your home or in a business, is much more efficient than using natural gas to generate electricity and then in turn delivering electricity to the customer.



Source energy from a coal plant is subject to many losses along the way. As well as losses within the generating process when coal is transformed into electricity, major losses occur along transmission lines, as well as within the building. This metric should be used in comparing appliances as it accounts for total energy usage.

SOURCE: ENERGY SOLUTIONS CENTER

naturallyBetter





# Creating a dream kitchen

## Consumers look for high tech and sustainable kitchen solutions

By Tonya McMurray

Sustainability, technology and larger, more open spaces top the trends in kitchen design, according to studies conducted by the National Kitchen and Bathroom Association (NKBA) and Houzz, a leading home remodeling and design platform.

The 2023 U.S. Houzz Kitchen Trends Study found that 92% of homeowners incorporate sustainable features during a kitchen renovation, including LED lights, energy-efficient appliances, water-efficient fixtures and energy-efficient windows. Study respondents indicated both long-term cost effectiveness and environmental benefits as reasons for choosing sustainable options.

Both the Houzz Kitchen Trends Study and NKBA's 2023 Design Trends Survey showed that technology is becoming more commonplace in kitchen design. NKBA reports consumers are adding smart app-based technology that helps control lighting and room temperature as well as activate appliances. Some popular choices include precision cooking, motion-sensor faucets and alerts for open refrigerator doors. In addition to those items, the Houzz study showed consumers are increasingly adding docking stations, wireless speakers and stereo systems to their kitchens.

The number of homeowners choosing appliances with high-tech features increased 4% in 2023, with 39% seeking high-tech appliances. As an example, new natural gas stoves and ovens feature innovations that both improve cooking performance and safety.

For example, Viking Range LLC offers a new series of ranges and range tops that feature gentle, even simmering and 23,000 BTU [British thermal units]-elevated surface burners, the Gourmet-Glo™ Infrared broiler and fully featured convection ovens.

*"It's no surprise that given the fact that the home has evolved into a place of rest, recreation and work, the kitchen becomes even more prominent in terms of space, function and design."*

— National Kitchen and Bathroom Association,  
2023 Design Trends Survey

PHOTO COURTESY OF VIKING RANGE LLC



One current trend is adding accents of color throughout the kitchen – even for kitchen appliances such as natural gas stoves.

"The Viking 7 Series Ranges and Range tops are the most innovative in Viking history, offering a new level of design and cooking performance for passionate home chefs," said LeAnne Gault, senior brand strategist for Viking Range. "They create a restaurant-caliber range unlike any other in the residential market."

Viking's new series also features backlit knobs, so consumers know at a glance when a burner is on even if it is on a barely visible low simmer, she said.

### MULTIFUNCTIONAL SPACES

Consumers use their kitchens for a variety of purposes, according to the Houzz survey. While cooking is the top use (96%), consumers also eat (71%), entertain (57%), socialize (46%) and even work (23%) in their kitchens.

"It's no surprise that given the fact that the home has evolved into a place of rest, recreation and work, the kitchen becomes even more prominent in terms of space, function and design," notes the NKBA survey.



As a result, NKBA reports, consumers are looking for larger and more open kitchen spaces with expanded functionality, efficient storage and concealed workspaces. The Houzz study echoed this finding, noting that 27% of homeowners expand their kitchens during a remodel, with 6% increasing the space by 50% or more. The study also showed that 40% of renovating homeowners choose to make kitchens more open to interior spaces and 20% make them more open to the outdoors.

With more open kitchen spaces, consumers are looking for ways to control clutter, according to NKBA. Its design trends report shows increased demand for walk-in, built-in and butler's pantries. The Houzz study also shows built-in cabinet storage is an increasingly popular

feature for kitchen renovations.

To accommodate food prep, dining, work and device charging, large, multi-functional islands with storage options. Houzz found that 74% of kitchen islands are 6 feet or longer, with drawers and cabinets included in the design 79% of the time.

### ADDING COLOR

NKBA's survey showed a preference for natural lighting along with a shift "to embrace an aesthetic of vibrancy, combining multiple design elements and materials along with bold accents, splashes of color and texture."

Gault notes that some consumers are even using appliances to add

## MULTIPLE STUDIES SHOW NO INCREASED RISK FROM GAS COOKING

When a commissioner from the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission told a reporter in January 2023 that the commission was looking at gas stoves due to mounting concerns about health risks, including increased risk of asthma, it quickly set off a debate about the accuracy of the research cited by the commissioner.

The research that sparked that comment was based on flawed studies. But several other studies have found no causal link between the use of gas stoves and health risks, according to an analysis by Catalyst Environmental Solutions Corp., an environmental consulting firm specializing in the energy sector, water resources and land development and remediation.

*It's worth noting that although there are air emissions associated with natural gas cooking and with electric stoves, researchers have consistently found that the long-term concentrations in real-life cooking scenarios are well below established health thresholds. After all, it's not the mere presence of a substance that determines health risk, but rather the concentration of that substance and the frequency and duration of human exposure."*

— Dan Tormey, Ph.D., researcher

"The Effects of Cooking on Residential Indoor Air Quality: A Critical Review of the Literature with an Emphasis on the Use of Natural Gas Appliances" was commissioned by the California Restaurant Association and the California Building Association. Conducted by researchers Dan Tormey, Ph.D., and Steve Huntley, it is an in-depth review of dozens of peer-reviewed studies and government assessments.

Researchers at Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory sampled gas stove emissions in 70 California homes built between 2011 and 2017. All nitrogen dioxide concentrations measured during normal gas stove operation with proper use of range hood ventilation were below the standard that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has determined is protective of public health.

"It's worth noting that although there are air emissions associated with natural gas cooking and with electric stoves, researchers have consistently found that the long-term concentrations in real-life cooking scenarios are well below established health thresholds," Tormey wrote in a March 2023 op-ed in the Washington Examiner that highlighted results of his analysis. "After all, it's not the mere presence of a substance that determines health risk, but rather the concentration of that substance and the frequency and duration of human exposure."

One of the largest studies to date, "Cooking Fuels and Prevalence of Asthma: A Global Analysis of Phase Three of

a bit of color to their kitchen.

“While stainless steel is still the most popular, people are really excited by the opportunity to express themselves through both their cooking and a kitchen that truly represents who they are,” she said. “Viking offers 14 contemporary colors that bring warmth, beauty and a unique style to any kitchen.”

The 2023 U.S. Houzz and Home Study on renovation trends, a survey of more than 45,000 homeowners, found that nearly one third

*“While stainless steel is still the most popular, people are really excited by the opportunity to express themselves through both their cooking and a kitchen that truly represents who they are. Viking offers 14 contemporary colors that bring warmth, beauty and a unique style to any kitchen.”*

— LeAnne Gault, senior brand strategist,  
Viking Range LLC

remodeled their kitchens last year. The study found that the number of homeowners planning renovations this year remains high as consumers seek to add convenience, sustainability and new technology to their kitchens. ■

the International Study of Asthma and Allergies in Childhood (ISAAC),” is a worldwide epidemiological study of more than 500,000 primary and secondary school children from 47 countries. The study found no evidence to support an association between natural gas as a cooking fuel and asthma symptoms or an asthma diagnosis.

No U.S. regulatory agencies have documented risks to public health, according to the American Gas Association. The Federal Interagency Committee on Indoor Air Quality (CIAQ) is comprised of two dozen federal agencies led by the EPA which regularly address indoor air quality issues. The CIAQ has not identified natural gas cooking emissions as an important factor in asthma or respiratory illnesses.

Tormey and Huntley’s analysis found that whether a stove is gas or electric is not a major factor in determining indoor air quality. Instead, studies indicate that food type, use of oils and cooking temperature and time are more critical factors.

The best way to mitigate emissions from either electric or gas cooking is proper ventilation, according to the studies analyzed by Tormey and Huntley. Cooking range hoods that vent exhaust outdoors can remove cooking byproducts such as steam, smoke, grease and heat to lower the risk of emissions. If an exhausting hood is not feasible, a recirculating hood with filtration will also reduce cooking byproducts. ■



PHOTO COURTESY OF VIKING RANGE LLC

Multiple studies show that gas stoves – especially when used with ventilation hoods – are not only energy efficient but also safe and reliable.





naturalFit



# Deck the halls

## Budget-friendly strategies for decorating your home like a pro

By Tonya McMurray

**A**chieving a festive home for the holidays doesn't have to be a costly undertaking. A few simple strategies can create a designer look at minimal cost.

The DIY Network, a cable network focused on home improvement, recommends focusing on areas in your home that guests are most likely to see. Rather than trying to decorate entire rooms, Home and Garden TV (HGTV), a Warner Bros. network focused on home improvement and real estate, recommends creating small “vignettes” throughout your home – small displays of holiday decorations. For example, arrange a few wrapped gifts with some sprigs of evergreen on a bookshelf or table or add seasonal accents to a shelf.

A key to holiday decorating on a budget is finding creative uses for items you already have at home, according to HGTV.

Create a welcoming holiday atmosphere with centerpieces or tabletop decorations featuring nuts, clementines, apples or candy arranged in attractive bowls, or add a few sprigs of fresh evergreens in small vases, recycled bottles, teapots or other everyday items.

Display holiday cards by hanging a strip of ribbon and attaching the cards to them, then add a bell or other decoration at the end of



A few Christmas baubles and evergreen sprigs create a quick holiday accent for tables or other small spaces throughout your home.

the ribbon. Scatter wrapped gifts throughout the home as part of your décor rather than gathering them all under the tree.

Place ornaments throughout the home, either hanging or collected in large glass jars and bowls.

HGTV recommends repurposing scraps of gift wrap to create a seasonal lining for serving plates.

### LIGHTS AND CANDLES

Strings of lights can add a festive touch with minimal cost. Use them on a staircase with a few Christmas balls attached. Create a minimalist focal point by keeping them all at the bottom of the stairs rather than doing the entire banister.

Scented candles and reed diffusers in scents of pine, cinnamon and juniper can add a welcoming holiday ambiance throughout the home.

Those who are crafty can create festive candle holders using small jars, glitter, plant mica, sand or gravel. Use stencils or tape to create stars or other holiday designs, cover them





with glue and dip into glitter. Add a bit of sand, plant mica or gravel inside the jar and put the candle in place. As an alternative, instead of glitter, wrap twine or ribbon around the jar, tie a knot and place sprigs of evergreen or holly through the knot.

A natural gas fireplace already creates a warm and welcoming atmosphere for holiday entertaining. Amplify the holiday appeal by adding pinecones and baubles to the mantle. Or lay small limbs from an evergreen tree across the mantle and hang decorations from the branches. Use battery-powered micro lights along the mantle to create a cozy look.

### WREATHS, GARLAND AND TREES

Store-bought wreaths and garlands are often expensive, but do-it-yourself options can create a fun and distinctive alternative.

Some options for creating your own wreath include wrapping fern fronds around wooden embroidery hoops, adding greenery and pinecones to a traditional wreath frame, or attaching Christmas balls in a circle and adding a ribbon bow.

To create fun alternatives to the traditional garland, knot together silk scarves, handkerchiefs or leftover fabric scraps to create a unique garland. Another twist on the traditional garland is to tie together pinecones using yarn or twine.

Rather than spend money on a traditional tree, cut greenery from evergreen trees and arrange them in a vase, making sure to change the water every few days. Keep it simple or add decorations and place gifts underneath.

With some creativity and a little planning, you can create a festive and welcoming holiday home that looks like you hired a personal designer at a fraction of the cost of a professional designer. ■



Adding a garland of pine above your natural gas fireplace brings in natural elements for an affordable, yet elegant holiday look.

*(continued from page 07)*

natural gas technology — plus, growing adoption of renewable natural gas — will only serve to further lower the carbon footprint of the natural gas industry and make natural gas homes even more environmentally friendly.

### 187 MILLION HAPPY U.S. CUSTOMERS

Due to its lower cost and higher efficiency, natural gas is depended on by 187,000,000 Americans every day. Since natural gas homes are better for the environment in terms of overall GHGs, expect more customers to demand natural gas.

“The most practical, realistic way to achieve a sustainable future where energy is clean – as well as safe, reliable and affordable – is to ensure it includes natural gas and the infrastructure that transports it,” Greene said. ■

*“Analysis shows that a typical new home that uses natural gas saves consumers money on energy bills and lowers greenhouse emissions (GHGs), even compared to high-efficiency, all-electric homes. The direct use of natural gas in residential applications can significantly reduce energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions compared with electricity and fuel oil.”*

— Brendan O’Brien, senior manager, energy analysis, American Gas Association.



# The forgotten appliance

## Natural gas dryers: the smart choice for the modern home

By Drew Robb

Parents with young kids know all about the importance of a reliable dryer. With a full load going in just about every single day, they need an appliance that gets the job done fast, efficiently and without running up utility bills. That's where a gas dryer excels over an electric dryer.

"I used an electric dryer for years and switched to a gas dryer when we moved to a new house," said Miranda Hazen, a mother of two from California. "I couldn't believe how much faster the gas appliance dried the clothes. Despite one or two loads going in every day, our gas bills remained low."

### GAS DRYER BENEFITS

Due to energy savings and higher efficiency, some estimate that about two loads in a gas dryer cost about the same as one load of laundry in an electric dryer. Gas dryers are gentler on fabrics, too, as they heat up and cool down faster.

Appliance expert John Carey, co-founder and vice president of Designer Appliances, has built a business around evaluating appliances. He champions the benefits of gas versus electric dryers.

"Gas is a more efficient fuel source for generating heat than electricity," he said. "Gas is combusted and instantly turns into heat inside the gas dryer burner, so there isn't much energy lost in the system."

Gas dryers also run hotter than electric dryers. In the hustle and

*"Gas dryers are almost always the better choice.*

*They are more efficient, better on the environment and cost less to run per load. With quicker drying cycles, you'll be able to run more loads in less time."*

— John Carey, co-founder and vice president, Designer Appliances

bustle of the modern world, the faster drying times offered by gas can mean the difference between completed laundry and damp clothing.

"In our busy lives, we all could use more time, and gas dryers help you achieve just that," Carey said.

Designer Appliances calculated how the efficiency and higher temperature of gas dryers equate to cost reductions. For a typical family that dries five loads of laundry per week, the average electric dryer will cost, according to Carey's numbers, \$130 per year while the same dryer that used gas instead of electricity would cost about \$85 per year to operate.

"Gas dryers are almost always the better choice," he said "They are more efficient, better on the environment and cost less to run per load.

With quicker drying cycles, you'll be able to run more loads in less time."

Building inspector Dennis Robb of Robb Inspections spends his days inspecting homes, condos and mansions throughout the greater Los Angeles area. A key part of his job is to ensure home appliances are in good shape and operate correctly. Based on his review of thousands of gas dryers, he is in no doubt about who wins when it comes to reliability and longevity.

"I see problems with older electric dryers far more frequently than I do with aging gas dryers," Robb said. "If gas dryers are hooked up correctly and well maintained, they can last a long time." ■



## APPLE CIDER PORK CHOPS

### INGREDIENTS

2 tablespoons olive oil  
 6 boneless pork loin chops (6 to 8 ounces each), about 3/4 inch thick  
 1 garlic clove, minced  
 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard  
 1 teaspoon honey  
 1/2 teaspoon apple pie spice  
 1/2 teaspoon coarsely ground pepper  
 1/4 teaspoon dried thyme  
 1/4 teaspoon salt  
 1 cup apple cider  
 1 tablespoon, plus 1 teaspoon cornstarch  
 2 tablespoons water  
 Minced fresh parsley

### DIRECTIONS

- 1 In a large skillet, heat olive oil over medium heat. Brown pork chops on both sides.
- 2 Meanwhile, in a small bowl, combine next

seven ingredients; stir in apple cider.

- 3 Pour over pork chops. Reduce heat to medium-low; cook, covered, until a thermometer inserted into chops reads 145°, 4-5 minutes.
- 4 Remove chops from skillet; let stand for 5 minutes.
- 5 In a small bowl, mix cornstarch and water until smooth; stir into cider mixture in skillet.
- 6 Return to a boil, stirring constantly; cook and stir until thickened, 1-2 minutes.
- 7 Pour over chops; sprinkle with fresh parsley.

### TIPS

- 1 Make a couple of crosswise slices just barely through the outer layer of fat, and pork chops will be less likely to curl when cooking.



PHOTO COURTESY OF TASTEOFHOM.COM

- 2 Use fresh pressed apple cider for an intense apple flavor in your sauce.

SOURCE: TASTEOFHOM.COM

## STOVETOP STEAM-FRIED GREEN BEANS AND MUSHROOMS

### INGREDIENTS

1 tablespoon olive oil  
 1 tablespoon butter  
 3 large shallots, sliced thinly  
 8 ounces cremini or button mushrooms, sliced thinly  
 1/4 teaspoon salt  
 1 1/4 pounds green beans; stem ends trimmed  
 1/4 cup chicken, turkey or vegetable broth

### DIRECTIONS

- 1 Heat the oil and butter in a large skillet over medium heat, swirling it around to coat the pan.
- 2 When the butter is fully melted and has stopped foaming, add the shallots, mushrooms and salt. Sauté until all of their liquid has evaporated from the mushrooms, and they are beginning to brown, about 10 minutes.

- 3 Add the green beans to the pan and stir to evenly distribute the shallots and mushrooms.
- 4 Pour the broth over the vegetables and cover the pan. Let cook, covered, until almost tender, about 10 minutes. Turn off the heat and let stand, still covered, for another 5 minutes.
- 5 Serve the green beans in a serving dish or shallow bowl, pouring all of the mushrooms and shallots over the top.

### TIPS

- 1 Keep the green beans warm in a slow cooker or covered dish in a warm oven for up to one hour.
- 2 Flavor variations: Basic green beans are what's expected for the holidays, but for weeknights you can dress up this dish with other flavors. Add Italian seasonings to the mushrooms and shallots for an



PHOTO COURTESY OF MELISSA RYAN

herbed version or add sesame oil and soy sauce for an Asian twist.

SOURCE: KITCHN.COM