

A modern kitchen with white cabinetry and a white countertop. A built-in microwave is visible above the counter. To the left, a refrigerator is open, showing its interior shelves. Below the counter, a dishwasher is open, revealing its internal racks. On the right side of the counter, there is a sink with a chrome faucet, a small white toaster, and a small, decorated Christmas tree. The floor is made of grey tiles.

BUYERS GUIDE

Compact Appliances

★euronics

INTRODUCTION

Compact appliances are a great solution if you're tight on space at home. Brands sell a range of compact, undercounter, and slimline models that are perfect for smaller rooms.

This buyers guide explains the different types of compact appliances on the market. It covers a range of categories such as dishwashing and refrigeration, including their sizes, capacities, and performance.



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COMPACT COOLING APPLIANCES



If you're moving to a home where there isn't enough space for a standalone refrigerator, undercounter models are a great solution. You can find separate freezers and fridges, and some fridges even have a built-in freezer section.

This section of our buyers guide tells you all you need to know about undercounter and mini fridges and freezers. We'll outline all the pros and cons, so you know which space-saving solution is the right choice for you.



UNDERCOUNTER FRIDGES

At around 85 cm high, undercounter models will fit neatly into standard kitchen fittings. Bear in mind that that you need to leave a space of 2 cm around the appliance for ventilation.

They often have similar features to taller models, such as adjustable shelves. So even though your storage space will be a little limited, you'll still have flexibility in what you can store.

Some undercounter fridges also have freezer space, which varies in capacity depending on the model – this is usually a compartment at the top of the fridge space.

“Undercounter fridges are the perfect solution if there is limited room.

UNDERCOUNTER FRIDGE FREEZERS

You can also purchase undercounter models which have a separate freezer compartment, accessible by its own door. As these models aren't as popular, you're likely to have a smaller range available.

This appliance is useful in the event of a power failure as it can store frozen items for a few hours. However, the split door does reduce the storage space. Many models have a reversible door, which allows the unit to fit into awkward spaces.



MINI FRIDGES

The best thing about mini fridges is that they can be kept almost anywhere, from kitchens to bedrooms. They're handy if you want to store fresh food in a flat, office, or temporary accommodation like a caravan.

Despite being small, many mini fridges still have an A+ energy efficiency rating. So, your bills won't increase if you're storing only a small amount of food. You can find smaller models from around £30 or larger sizes at £150.

HOW SMALL ARE MINI FRIDGES?

The height and depth of mini fridges can vary. They typically have a width of around 45 cm, but the smallest are just 20 cm wide and 30 cm tall. They can range in height from under 50 cm to around 65 cm, and in depth from 45 cm to 51 cm.

“ Their capacity varies from around 30 litres to 68 litres. Typically you'll get more space if you increase your budget.



“Mini fridges and freezers can be easily moved around, and are useful if you need extra storage space for drinks.

MINI FREEZERS

Mini freezers are also known as tabletop freezers, and you can find one for as little as £89.

Like mini fridges, more expensive models will have a higher capacity. Plus, freezing food can be more cost effective as it prevents waste, and you can stock up on good deals.



COMPACT AND SLIMLINE DISHWASHERS



Dishwashers are more hygienic than washing by hand, and even the smaller models allow you to get everything cleaned conveniently. If you need a dishwasher that doesn't take up too much space, there are two types on the market. Slimline dishwashers can be freestanding or built into awkward spaces, while compact models can be integrated or placed on your worktops.



COMPACT DISHWASHERS

If your space is really tight, or you're restricted by built-in units, you could buy a compact or tabletop dishwasher.

At around 55 cm wide, these models can sit on your worktop or be integrated into your kitchen.

SIZE

Compact models are often 10 cm wider than slimline models but around half the height. At about 50 cm deep, they are around 10 cm deeper than a large microwave.

This means they can fit into snug spaces which is perfect if you've got an awkward space to fill. However, their size means they can only wash smaller items so you might still need to hand wash your pots and pans.



CAPACITY

You can determine a dishwasher's capacity by the number of place settings it can hold. Typically, compact dishwashers hold six to eight place settings.

Despite being smaller, they don't compromise on washing capabilities. Many models have multiple temperature settings, quick wash programmes, glass care washes, and anti-flood devices.

NOISE

You may be worried that a countertop model will be noisy, but many are designed to run quietly. Typically, most models produce around 50 dB, which is the same volume level as a people talking.

“Typically, compact dishwashers hold six to eight place settings. Despite being smaller, they don't compromise on washing capabilities.”



COST

The price of compact dishwashers is relatively high as they aren't commonly sold, so you'll need a budget of around £300. They're also much less energy efficient than larger models, meaning your long-term costs will increase.

SLIMLINE DISHWASHERS

Slimline dishwashers are designed to fit under a conventional worktop surface and are ideal if you have a smaller kitchen.

At just 45 cm wide, they're 15 cm slimmer than most full-sized versions. The majority of slimline dishwashers are 85 cm tall and have a depth of 50-60 cm. However, their capacities are slightly smaller than full-sized models so larger, standard models are more energy efficient.

“The majority of slimline dishwashers are 85 cm tall and have a depth of 50-60 cm.

CAPACITY

Slimline dishwashers can hold nine to ten place settings, while standard dishwashers can hold up to 16. You'll need to bear in mind that the number of place settings decreases if you're washing large, bulky items.

Most slimline models have similar features to standard models, including foldable racks and cutlery baskets.



FREESTANDING OR INTEGRATED

Like standard-sized models, slimline dishwashers are either integrated or freestanding. Integrated dishwashers are perfect if you want your kitchen to have a neat, streamline finish.

Freestanding, slimline dishwashers allow you to move appliances to wherever suits you. This is perfect if you're restricted to an allocated space in a flat or house share, or if you're in temporary accommodation.

COST

The price range is similar for both slimline and standard-sized dishwashers. You can buy a basic slimline model for under £250. But, integrated models can be a little more expensive due to the installation costs.



Integrated dishwashers are perfect if you want your kitchen to have a neat, streamline finish. Freestanding, slimline dishwashers allow you to move appliances to wherever suits you.

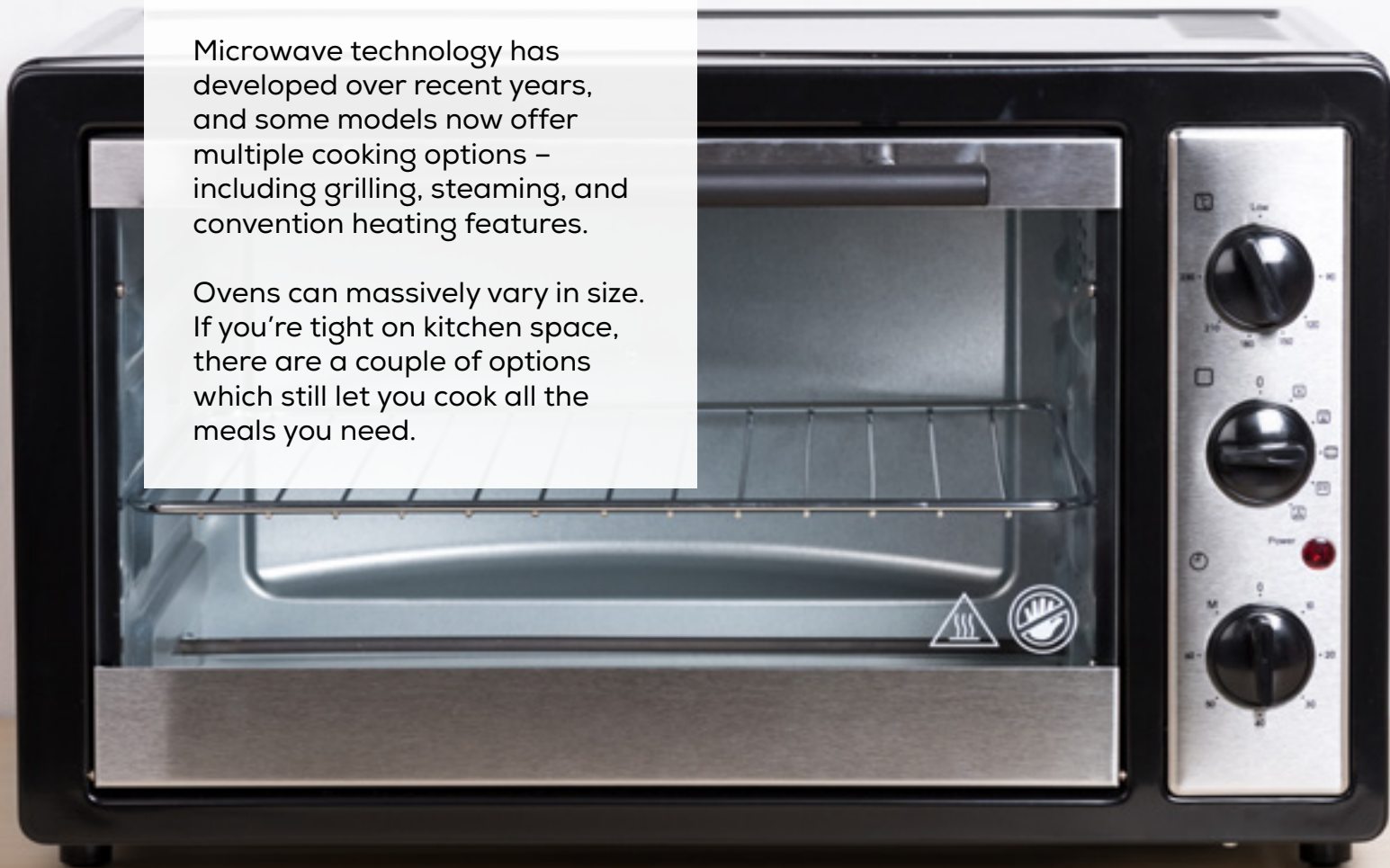


SPACE-SAVING COOKING APPLIANCES



Microwave technology has developed over recent years, and some models now offer multiple cooking options – including grilling, steaming, and convention heating features.

Ovens can massively vary in size. If you're tight on kitchen space, there are a couple of options which still let you cook all the meals you need.



MICROWAVE OVENS

Regular solo microwaves are great for a range of uses, as they usually feature controls to adjust the temperature, time, and weight.

While they're often used with full-sized ovens, they can be used to cook a full meal alone. They're ideal if you're restricted by space in a caravan or small flat.

MICROWAVE & GRILL

High-end models often offer a grill function which lets you achieve a crisp golden finish to your meals.

Unlike standard microwaves, these models can brown food, making them a great space-saving option in comparison to an oven with grill.

Integrated models are ideal for smaller kitchens where space is tighter.

COMBINATION MICROWAVES

Combi microwaves come with a convection oven.

Alongside grilling functions, they can also work as conventional microwaves. These models tend to be more expensive but can remove the need to purchase a regular oven.

Integrated models are fitted into your kitchen units to save space, and they're a perfect choice if you prefer your microwave at eye level. There are also freestanding models, which can be placed on a worktop or in a kitchen unit cupboard.



“Combi microwaves come with a convection oven. Alongside grilling functions, they can also work as conventional microwaves.”



OVENS

Single, compact ovens are built into your kitchen units and are a great option if you're looking to save space. They're usually fitted with a grill, offering more flexibility.

At around 45 cm tall, they're a similar size to larger integrated microwaves. This size would be suitable for a single person or a couple, but you may have to cook a larger meal in stages.

HOBBS

If you don't have space for a full hob set, you can pick up a smaller hot plate model. This portable appliance can be placed on your worktop and features one or two electric burners.

You'll still be able to control the heat, and typically one of the burners is larger and more powerful than the other. The power is strong enough that you can still boil, simmer, and fry just as you would with a standard hob.

Hot plates are also great for caravans and mobile homes, as they're lightweight and easily transported.

COOKERS

Freestanding cookers don't vary hugely in sizes – the width is usually the only variable which ranges from 50 to 60 cm wide. The smallest full-size cooker is around 90 cm (H) x 50 cm (W) x 60 cm (D).

For kitchens without enough space, there are several tabletop cookers available. These models have a main oven, around 21–30 litres, and sometimes feature two electric hob rings on top. They're closer in size to a microwave than a standard cooker, with sizes starting from around 30 cm (H) x 47 cm (W) x 35 cm (D).

Integrated ovens provide the most practical finish, but it can be more expensive to design an integrated kitchen.



VACUUM CLEANERS FOR SMALL SPACES



Vacuum cleaners come in a range of shapes and sizes, and there are several options to choose from if your home is short on storage.

This section will take you through different types of compact vacuum cleaners to help you decide on a compact model that's right for you.



CYLINDER VACUUMS

Cylinder vacuums are smaller and lighter than traditional upright models.

They can be used on a range of floor surfaces, and often come with multiple attachments such as a crevice nozzle and dusting brush.

Bagged cylinders tend to have a larger capacity, although bagless models are more cost effective. Plus, bagless models are kinder to the environment, and won't lose suction power as they fill up with dust.

Bagless cylinders often use cyclone technology which traps allergens and bacteria. They're becoming more popular as technology advances, with bagged models quickly becoming outdated.

“Cylinder vacuums are smaller and lighter than traditional upright models.”

STICK AND CORDLESS VACUUMS

Stick models have a suction tube and handle, and dirt is collected in a small compartment either halfway up or near the handle.

They are much easier to manoeuvre than upright models and typically weigh around 3 kg. Storing stick cleaners is much more convenient, due to their slim design.

The capacity of cordless models is typically no more than one litre, and their battery life ranges from 10 to 75 minutes.



HANDHELD VACUUMS

Handheld vacuums are much smaller, with only a handle and nozzle, and vary more in terms of performance. They tend to have a much shorter battery life between five and 30 minutes, and prices can range from around £20 to £200.

The major advantage is that they're compact and light, varying in weight from 0.7 kg to 2.3 kg. Handhelds have a smaller capacity than conventional vacuum cleaners, ranging from 0.2-0.6 litres.

This type is more suited to restricted spaces, and some models can also vacuum wet spills too.



Handheld vacuums are much smaller, with only a handle and nozzle, and vary more in terms of performance.



SMALL SCREEN TVS



If you don't have much space for a large screen TV, you don't always have to compromise on the quality. There's a great range of compact TVs available, many of which come with fantastic features. These models are ideal for bedrooms, kitchens, caravans, and flats.

Find out more in this section of our guide.



SCREEN SIZE

The smallest TVs that are available are around 19", but most compact TVs are between 24"-32". You can easily watch a 24" TV at around six feet away from the screen, which is ideal for a smaller living room.

The majority of modern TVs are slimly designed to produce a sleek, minimalistic look. This is still the case for small screen models.

It's easy to mount smaller televisions onto the wall, and wall brackets can support varying sizes and weights. There are two types of brackets – you can either attach your TV to the wall or use retractable arms to pull out a TV from the cupboard. Many of these brackets will specify which type of wall is suitable, such as solid or wood stud.

You can also find many models with integrated DVD players. This saves you having to store a separate box, and the cables needed to connect it to the TV. However, TVs with this feature won't be as slim because of the DVD player.

As with standard sized TVs, you'll find a selection of connection ports. Most models will feature HDMI, USB, and SCART ports – ideal for Blu-ray players, game consoles, and soundbars.

“The majority of modern TVs are slimly designed to produce a sleek, minimalistic look.”



IMAGE QUALITY

You'll still be able to enjoy a Full HD resolution on a smaller screen. An HD Ready model will also let you watch HD content, but it won't be as good as a Full HD screen. Many TVs also have a built-in HD Freeview or Freesat tuner, so you can enjoy digital channels subscription-free.

You can even find LED backlit technology, which produces a brighter image. You won't find any 4K features on models of these sizes as the screen is too small to show the increased details.

SMART FEATURES

Many small TVs offer smart features, which allow you to watch on-demand services from apps like BBC iPlayer, 4oD, and ITV Hub. You can even access online streaming services, like Netflix and Amazon Video.

Some brands will also allow you to stream from your smartphone to the screen – great if you're showing off your latest holiday pictures.



OTHER POINTS TO CONSIDER



You might be moving into a smaller home and taking your old appliances with you. If so, there are a couple of storage options to help you maximise space inside and out. These include stacking your appliances or keeping them in the garage. This section of our buyers guide will take you through how you can do both safely.



APPLIANCES IN OUTBUILDINGS

Keeping your freezer in the garage is a good way to maximise kitchen space, and is useful if you like to stock up on frozen food. Manufacturers specify the minimum operating temperature, so you'll know if your freezer is suitable for outbuildings.

However, not all cooling appliances are suitable for outbuildings or garages – most freezers shouldn't be kept in rooms which get colder than 10°C. Make sure you check the small print as the warranty might be invalid if you keep your appliance in the garage.

All fridges, freezers, and fridge freezers have a climate class which highlights the temperature range at which the appliance can work:

10–32°C: SN (subnormal)

16–32°C: N (normal)

16–38°C: ST (subtropical)

16–43°C: T (tropical)

The majority of freezers made in the UK are SN (subnormal), but Beko do sell a range of freezers which work in temperatures as low as -15°C.

Generally, washing machines are not suitable for outbuildings. This is because there could be issues with the temperature extremes, pumping, and draining, as well as the risk of condensation build-up.

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STACKING APPLIANCES

If you have a separate washing machine and tumble dryer, you can save floor space by stacking one appliance on top of the other. But, there are a few things you need to think about in order to stack safely.

STACKING KITS

Most major brands sell stacking kits, and they're available in hardware shops. They're relatively cheap to buy – especially compared to the price of a new combined appliance.

The kit prices can vary from around £50 to £100. All kits will connect your appliances safely, but some more expensive models may feature a pull-out shelf to help you unload the washing.

Normally these kits are made from plastic, but the more you pay, the thicker the material – premium models often feature a metal base. The majority of kits are a discreet white to match the colour of most laundry appliances.



“If you have a separate washing machine and dryer, you can place one appliance on top of the other.”



THE APPLIANCE'S BRAND

Some manufacturers specify whether or not their appliances are suitable for stacking, but it's strongly advised that you only stack appliances of the same brand. For example, it's recommended to stack a Bosch tumble dryer on top of a Bosch washing machine.

If you stack two appliances from different brands, the sizes may be slightly different. This will cause the structure to be unsafe, so you'll need a 'Universal Stacking Kit'. These kits are designed to fit a standard size of 60 x 60 cm and might feature a ratchet strap to lock the machines together.

You shouldn't stack machines with rounded edges, as the weight won't be evenly spread. You can also only stack front-loading machines otherwise the doors will be blocked.

“ It is strongly advised that you only stack appliances which have been made by the same brand.

STACKING METHOD

Moving heavy appliances is tricky and can be dangerous, so we advise that you get an expert to fit the kit.

You will need several people to lift the appliances as this is the most difficult part of the process. You should also be aware that you can only place tumble dryers on top of the stack, as washing machines are too heavy.



COMBINATION APPLIANCES

Another space-saving option you could use is to look for multi-use appliances. These include items like washer dryers, and blenders that can act as food processors.

Using appliances with more than one purpose is a great way to save space, but combination models are more likely to break down. This is because the appliances are effectively doing the work of two machines, so there are more complex parts.

Individual appliances are also often cheaper than a combined model, but if you needed to buy a washing machine and a tumble dryer, a washer dryer would be less expensive.

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Phone 01264 320504 – Mon – Fri 9am – 5pm

Order enquiries – orders@euronics.co.uk

Customer support – customersupport@euronics.co.uk

Euronics Limited

Euro House, Joule Road, West Portway

Andover, Hampshire, SP10 3GD

www.euronics.co.uk



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