

## Buyers Guide to Prime Cooking Equipment Ranges

The [cooking range](#) is the heart of a traditional kitchen. From the basic gas or electric radiants with oven underneath to solid tops and boiling tables.

Ranges can also be a table top item without any oven space underneath. For a more detailed explanation please look at our "[buyers guide to cooking ranges](#)".

## Ovens

While many ovens come as an integral part of a [cooking range](#), there are a variety of other types depending on your need.

[Microwave ovens](#) are as we use at home but built to a higher standard for heavy use.

For a more detailed explanation please look at our "[buyers guide to understanding microwaves](#)".

[Convection ovens](#) are again similar what we would find at home with the commercial machine being heavier duty.

The heat is spread very evenly around the cavity by means of an electric fan built into the wall of the oven. This gives very even cooking for all foods, but it is especially important in bakery and desert work where evenness of temperature is critical.

[Combination ovens](#) are often the 'workhorses' of the busy commercial kitchen and combines a number of features and can be dry or wet heat, still or fan driven.

For a more detailed explanation please look at our "[buyers guide to combi ovens](#)".

## Grills and salamanders

These are two words for the same item of [catering equipment](#) and there are two types available. The conventional grill is usually [gas powered salamanders](#) in the UK, but [electric salamander](#) models are available. Some have variable heat settings that adjust the cooking temperature, but raising or lowering the grill tray with the heat full on is the usual method as this keeps cooking even. An additional item popular for [meat grilling](#) is a branding plate. This is a ridged cast iron plate that sits on the grill pan. When a piece of meat is put on the branding plate it cooks from both sides and has a char-grilled appearance.

## Griddles and char-grills

[Griddles](#) are a very simple item of [cooking equipment](#), popular for breakfast preparation, burgers and any thin food items, but are slow to cook thick portions of meat such as steaks or chops. There are two surfaces to choose from. Steel is the cheaper and most popular, either as carbon steel or stainless steel. Chromed griddles cook the same, but tend to be less prone to food sticking and are easier to keep clean.

[Char-grills](#) are popular for the barbecue look and taste they bring to meat, fish and vegetables. There are two popular systems of delivering the heat, almost always coming from gas. Lava rock is the most common and gives a traditional barbecue taste and smell. Its drawbacks are that the lava rock can become impregnated with food, which when it burns off creates a lot of smoke in the kitchen and distribution of the lava rock has to be very level to give even cooking when the char-grill is full.

The other system is not to use lava rock at all, but to have upward-facing gas jets that are shielded by a protective steel shroud to prevent fat falling into the jets and clogging them. As the fat falls onto the hot protective covers, it carbonises and gives off the smoke that brings the barbecue flavour. This system is easier to clean.

## Steamers

Steamers lost some popularity with the advent of combi-ovens, but are a very useful item of equipment where a lot of steaming is done in the kitchen such as with fish, vegetables or steamed puddings. Having a dedicated steamer prevents tying up the combi-oven for long periods of steaming when it is needed for other cooking modes.

There are two types of steamer. A pressureless steamer cooks with steam at normal atmospheric pressure and is very gentle for items such as fish. A pressure steamer is like a domestic pressure cooker, working with a sealed chamber that allows the steam temperature to rise, so cooking faster and able to tenderise tough cuts of meat.

This is by no means a definitive guide as this is such a large subject however we hope it is of use and interest.

This guide has been written by [Advantage Catering Equipment](#).

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