

BUSINESS NEWS

Stove Makers Increase Induction Offerings

BY JOHN KEILMAN

Some big stove makers are betting on an electromagnetic future, developing models that companies say can cook much faster than traditional gas and electric versions.

Manufacturers of GE, Viking and other stove brands have been expanding their lineups of induction ranges and cooktops, electric appliances that use a magnetic field to heat pots and pans in what the companies bill as a speedy, precise and energy-efficient manner.

Induction models have been around for decades, but command a fraction of the overall stove market. They are generally more expensive than other stoves, sometimes require new electrical wiring, and can be used only with pots and pans that have a magnetic bottom—cast iron works, aluminum doesn't.

The technology's advantages persuaded Tim FitzGerald, chief executive of Middleby Corp., to make induction a strategic centerpiece for the maker of Viking stoves and other brands. Since 2009, Middleby has bought three companies that specialize in induction cooking. "Speed is a big area for convenience, both at restaurants and in the home," Mr. FitzGerald said.

The Association of Home Appliance Manufacturers, which represents

such as Whirlpool Corp., LG Electronics and Samsung America, estimated that 60% of the ranges and cooktops delivered to retailers and home builders annually are electric, and 40% are gas.

In 2022, induction models accounted for 2.7% of the electric-range market, association spokeswoman Jill Notini said, though it grew 40% over 2021's level. For cooktops, which don't include an oven, induction made up 31% of the electric market, and grew by 6% from the prior year, she said.

GE Appliances, owned by China-based Haier Group, said it is broadening its selection of induction models, with half of the 28 electric cooktops planned to be introduced this year featuring induction technology.

Startups are targeting the technology as well, including San Francisco-based Impulse Labs Inc., which has raised \$25 million to develop an induction stove with a battery that will allow the appliance to be installed in a kitchen without redoing the electrical system. "We've got a product that's very compelling for the remodel situation," said Impulse Chief Executive Sam D'Amico.



An employee checks on an induction cooktop at GE Appliances subsidiary Roper Corporation in Georgia.

How an induction burner works

Induction cooking uses electricity to create a magnetic field that induces a current in a compatible pot or pan, heating it without directly warming the surface of the burner. Advocates say it's a faster and more energy-efficient process than cooking with a traditional gas or electric stove.

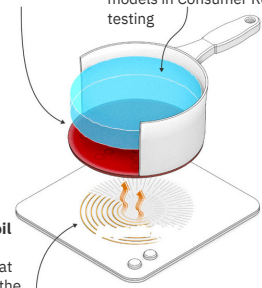
Magnetic cookware

Pots and pans must contain magnetic material. Cast iron works — aluminum doesn't.

Fast cooking times

Boils water 20 to 40 percent faster than the best traditional models in Consumer Reports testing

Electromagnetic power coil
Electricity creates an oscillating magnetic field that transfers energy directly to the cookware, causing it to warm



Sources: Frigidaire; Explain that Stuff; Consumer Reports

Jemal R. Brinson/The Wall Street Journal

The appliance industry was jolted in January when Richard Trumka Jr., a commissioner with the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, said in an interview that gas stoves represent a health hazard, leading to reports that a ban could be considered.

The commission later said that no federal ban is being contemplated, and President Biden said he doesn't support one. Cities including Los Angeles and New York have passed restrictions on using natural gas in newly built homes, but those rules don't apply to existing buildings.

The industry is raising an alarm about a proposed federal regulation, published Wednesday, that would govern the energy consumption of cooking appliances. Ms. Notini said nearly all current gas ranges would have to be redesigned to meet the new standards, affecting their features and performance.

The Energy Department said that the proposal is about efficiency standards for gas and electric cooktops, and that the agency isn't proposing a ban on either.

Some studies have found that gas stoves release pollutants that can increase the risk of some health issues, such as asthma. The American Gas Association has said the research is faulty.