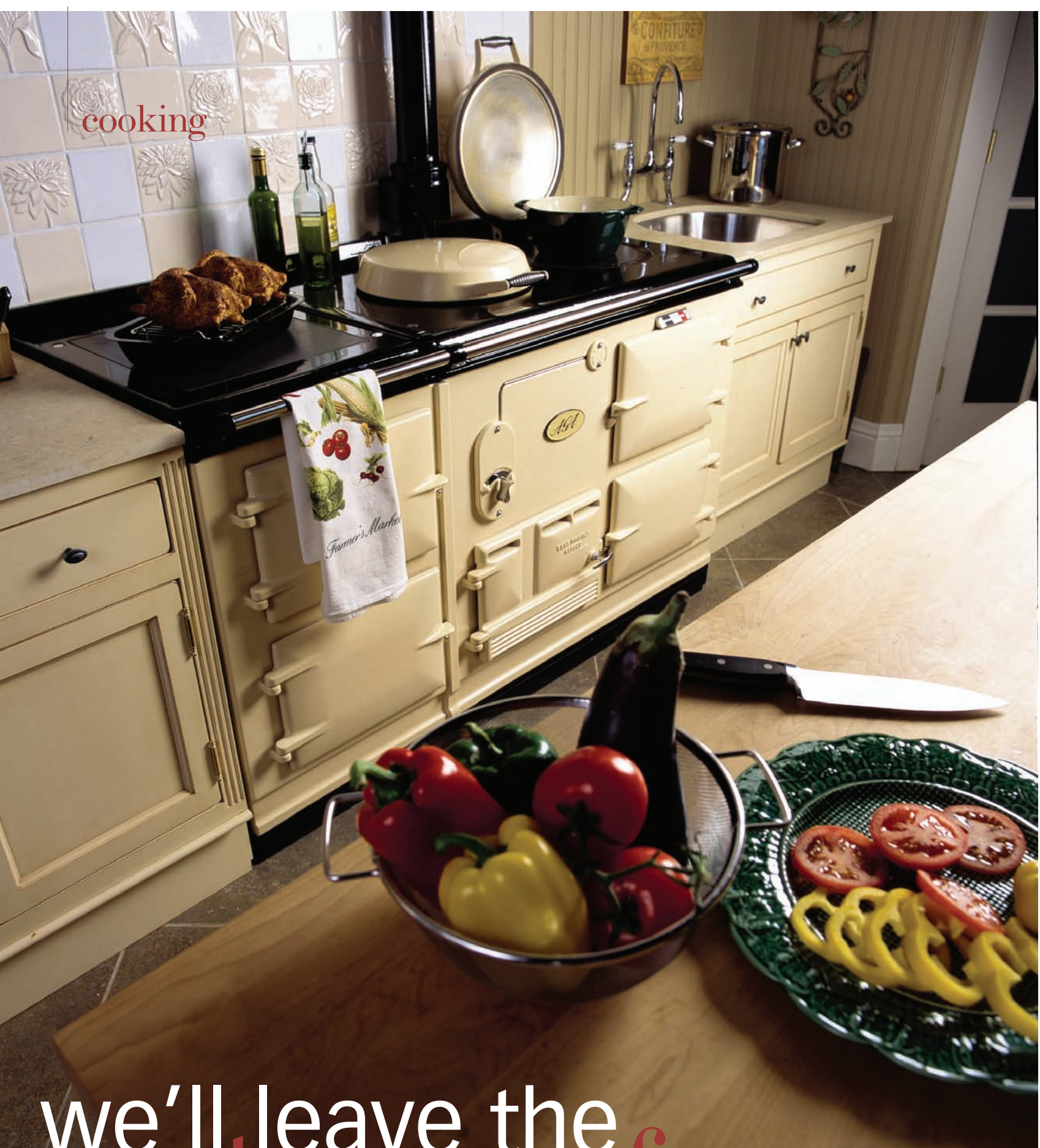


cooking



we'll leave the
stove on for you

by ginny demille

The Rolls-Royce of cookers.” Perhaps because people tend to hold onto their Aga for a long time or pass it down to the next generation, or because it takes undeniable prominence in any kitchen design, or because of its price tag, the Aga (pronounced AH-gah) earns the distinction. The Aga is a culinary legend for over 80 years. With its U.K. origins, this kitchen appliance is different from any other kitchen stove manufactured stateside.

The Aga is made of cast iron, with heat storage and transmission properties. It generates heat by a single burner which is then continually released by the cast iron through two or more ovens and surfaces. A single gas burner in the center of the unit continually delivers heat to the various cooking areas. Keeping the ovens and hotplates always hot and ready to cook, the Aga compares to a reliable hot water heater.

Invented in 1912 by Nils Gustaf Dalén, a blind Swedish physicist, the first Aga arrived in the U.K. in 1929. The Aga, first billed as a heat storage cooker, was touted as the most economical cooking range in the world.

always on and ready to cook

Today, the legendary cooking appliance has made its way to Long Island. It sits in kitchens, always on, always ready to cook, simmer, roast or grill. A variety of sizes and oven options accommodates a range of culinary needs. The flagship, four-oven Aga has a roasting oven producing 425° to 450°, a baking oven at 325° to 450°, a warming oven at 125° to 250°, and the hallmark simmering oven for slow-cooking stews, rice, etc. at 225° to 250°F.

Instead of burners, the top surface contains two large hotplates: a boiling plate for bringing pots to a boil in no time and a simmering plate for heating sauces, cooking pancakes and so on. Cast iron lids, coated in chrome or enamel, cover the hotplates when not in use or provide an upper heated surface when lowered over grilled cheese sandwiches and other grilled items.

Some dishes are started on the hotplate, brought to a quick boil or browned, then go right in one of the radiant heat ovens which cook faster than regular electric or gas ovens. With no coils or burners inside, the entire interior oven space can be used. We watched as Paul Chinn, local Aga Sales Consultant with Domain home furnishings

unique “cooker”
is always ready,
always on –
creating quite a
stir in seattle





stores, slid a huge lobster pot inside the roasting oven, nearly touching the sides and top. Chinn says there are no hot or cold spots with radiant heat, so contents cook evenly.

life in balance again

Aga folks say food cooked in radiant heat stays moister and is healthier. "The Aga puts balance back in your life," Chinn says. "The slow-

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cooking food movement gives you time back in your day, while serving up a healthier meal. You can put all the ingredients for dinner into pots, put them in the appropriate ovens, and go do something else, like read a book." No frequent stirring, and don't worry about mixing cooking aromas. Chinn says all the ovens are vented, so you can bake an apple pie and a salmon dish in the same oven with no flavors crossing over.

Since it's always on, the Aga is essentially contin-

uously cleaning. All you need is a little broom or brush to sweep out the ash. One British spokeswoman said she forgot about a loaf of bread she'd left baking. A few days later, she was surprised to open the door, and shrieked, "Oh, no! Who put charcoal in my Aga?"

heat in the kitchen

How does that constant source of radiant heat factor into your air conditioning bill during those hot, humid days of Long Island summer? Chinn says the unit's continual radiant heat consumes only \$2 per day in natural gas, slightly more for the optional propane gas. The Aga throws off approximately 4000 btu's of heat in the kitchen compared to a typical refrigerator which throws off 900 btu's.

Although warm to the touch, the Aga's continual radiant heat wouldn't burn the skin. The heat it gives off cautions little ones to steer clear. Some Aga owners use the front handle to warm or dry towels, jeans, or duvet covers. It warms socks and mittens in



the winter, and the top warms your coffee mug for breakfast.

The Aga's glossy vitreous enamel exterior is available in a palette of colors including designer colors such as jade, Wedgwood, dark blue, red,

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yellow, heather and pistachio. Kitchen designers can work well with the colors, but the metric sizes do pose a bit of a problem fitting the Aga into conventional cabinetry. The Aga comes in at a lower surface height than traditional kitchen counters, so the company offers a matching threshold to make it fit flush with counter height, if desired. A special line of cookware, with flat lids for stacking pots in the ovens, is available from Aga. Most cookware works well in the ovens or on the hotplates.

Other options include the Companion, a 24" cast iron dual-fuel cooker, using electric ovens and natural gas or propane stove top burners that operate on command. Chinn says the Companion is a good size for apartments. "Some customers build the Companion onto their two-, three-, or four-oven Aga," he added.



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