Ancient people first began cooking on open fires. The cooking fires were placed on the ground and later simple masonary construction were used to hold the wood and/or food. Simple ovens were used by the [ancient Greeks](http://ancienthistory.about.com/od/greeksociety/qt/120410-Ancient-Greek-foods.htm) for making bread and other baked goods. By the [middle ages](http://inventors.about.com/od/timelines/a/MiddleAges.htm), taller brick & mortar hearths, often with chimneys were being built. The food to be cooked was often placed in metal cauldrons that were hung above the fire. The first written historical record of an oven being built, refers to an oven built in 1490, in Alsace, France. This oven was made entirely of brick and tile, including the flue.

**Improvements to Wood Burning Ovens**

Inventors began making improvements to wood burning stoves primarily to contain the bothersome smoke that was being produced. Fire chambers were invented that contained the wood fire, and holes were built into the top of these chambers that cooking pots with flat bottoms could be placed directly upon replacing the cauldron.

One masonary design of note, was the 1735 Castrol stove (aka stew stove) invented by French architect François Cuvilliés. It completely contained the fire, and had several opening covered by iron plates with holes.

**Iron Stoves**

Around 1728, cast iron ovens really began to be made in quantity. These first ovens of German design were called Five-plate or Jamb stoves.

Around 1800, [Count Rumford](http://inventors.about.com/od/rstartinventions/a/inventions_r.htm) (aka Benjamin Thompson) invented a working iron kitchen stove called the Rumford stove that was designed for very large working kitchens. The Rumford had one fire source that could heat several cooking pots, the heating level for each pot could be regulated individually. However, the Rumford stove was too large from the average kitchen and inventors continued to improve their designs.

One successful and compact cast iron design was Stewart's Oberlin iron stove, patented in the 1834. Cast iron stoves continued to evolve, with iron gratings added to the cooking holes, and added chimneys and connecting flue pipes.

**Coal & Kerosene**

Frans Wilhelm Lindqvist designed the first sootless kerosene oven.

Jordan Mott invented the first practical coal oven in 1833. Mott's oven was called the baseburner. The oven had ventilation to burn the coal efficiently. The coal oven was cylindrical and made of heavy cast iron with a hole in the top, which was then enclosed by an iron ring.

**Gas**

British inventor, James Sharp patented a gas oven in 1826, the first semi-successful gas oven to appear on the market. Gas ovens were found in most households by the 1920s with top burners and interior ovens. The evolution of gas stoves was delayed until gas lines that could furnish gas to households became common.

During the 1910s, gas stoves appeared with enamel coatings that made the stoves easier to clean. One important gas design of note was the AGA cooker invented in 1922 by Swedish Nobel prize winner Gustaf Dalén.

**Electricity**

It was not until the late 1920s and early 1930s that electric ovens began to compete with gas ovens, however, electric ovens were available as early as the 1890s. However, at that time, the technology and distribution of the [electricity](http://inventors.about.com/od/timelines/a/electricity_timeline.htm) needed to power these early electric appliances still needed improvements.

Some historians credit, [Canadian](http://inventors.about.com/od/cstartinventions/a/Canadian.htm) Thomas Ahearn with inventing the first electric oven in 1882. Thomas Ahearn and his business partner Warren Y. Soper owned the Chaudiere Electric Light and Power Company of Ottawa. However, the Ahearn oven was only put into service in 1892, in the Windsor Hotel of Ottawa. The Carpenter Electric Heating Manufacturing Company invented an electric oven in 1891. An electric stove was exhibited at the Chicago World's Fair in 1893. On June 30, 1896, William Hadaway was issued the first patent for an electric oven. In 1910, William Hadaway went on to design the first toaster made by Westinghouse, a horizontal combination toaster-cooker.

One major improvement in electric ovens was the invention of resistor heating coils, a familar design in ovens also seen in hotplates.

**Microwaves**

The [microwave oven](http://inventors.about.com/od/kstartinventions/a/kitchen.htm) was a by-product of another technology. It was during a radar-related research project around 1946 that Dr. Percy Spencer, an engineer with the Raytheon Corporation, noticed something very unusual.

Hand irons are devices used for [garment](http://inventors.about.com/od/cstartinventions/a/clothing.htm) pressing. Irons have been heated directly by gas flame, stove plate heat, or, in the case of the modern iron, by electricity. Henry W. Seely patented the electric flat iron in 1882.

**Before Electricity**

The use of hot, flat surfaces to [smooth out fabrics and reduce creasing dates](http://laundry.about.com/od/howtoiron/a/Ironing-101-Introduction-To-Ironing-Clothes.htm) back thousands of years and can be found in many early civilizations. In China, for instance, hot charcoal in metal pans was used.

Smoothing Stones have been around since the 8th and 9th century and are known as the earliest western ironing devices, looking somewhat like large mushrooms.

At the dawn of the Industrial Revolution, a variety of metal vessels were made that could bring a hot surface to rumpled cloth. Such early irons were also known as flatirons or sadirons, meaning “solid” irons. Some were filled with hot materials, such as coals. Others were placed directly in a fire until their ironing surfaces were hot enough for use.

It was not uncommon to rotate multiple flatirons through a fire so that one would always be ready after others had cooled down.

In 1871, a model of iron with removable handles—to avoid having them heat up as the iron did—was introduced and marketed as “Mrs. Potts’ Removable Handle Iron.”

**The Electric Iron**

On June 6, 1882, Henry W. Seely of New York City patented the electric iron, at the time called an electric flatiron. Early [electric irons](http://laundry.about.com/od/laundryappliances/tp/Selectinganiron.htm) developed around the same time in France used a carbon arc to create heat, however, this proved unsafe and commercially unsuccessful.

In 1892, hand irons using electrical resistance were introduced by Crompton and Co. and the General Electric Company, allowing for the regulation of the iron’s heat. As the popularity of handheld electric irons took off, sales were propelled even more by the introduction during the early 1950s of electric steam irons.

By definition, the kitchen is a room used for food preparation that is typically equipped with a stove, a sink for cleaning food and dish-washing, and cabinets and refrigerators for storing food and equipment.

Kitchens have been around for centuries, however, it was not until post-civil war period that the majority of kitchen appliances were invented. The reason was that most people no longer had servants and housewives working alone in the kitchen needed [culinary](http://homeworktips.about.com/od/wordswemispronounce/g/culinary.htm) help. Also the advent of [electricity](http://inventors.about.com/od/timelines/a/electricity_timeline.htm) greatly advanced the technology of labor-saving kitchen appliances.

### History of Kitchen Appliances

### Large Kitchen Appliances

* [Dishwasher](http://inventors.about.com/od/famousinventions/fl/Josephine-Cochran.htm)  
  In 1850, Joel Houghton patented a wooden machine with a hand-turned wheel that splashed water on dishes, it was hardly a workable machine, but it was the first [patent](http://inventors.about.com/od/inventing101patents/f/What_patent.htm).
* Garbage Disposer  
  Architect, inventor John W. Hammes built his wife the world's first kitchen garbage disposer in 1927. After ten years of design improvement, Hammes went into business selling his appliance to the public. His company was called the In-Sink-Erator Manufacturing Company.
* [Ovens or Stoves](http://inventors.about.com/od/ofamousinventions/a/oven.htm)  
  The first historical record of a stove being built refers to a stove built in 1490 in Alsace, France.
* Microwave Ovens  
  The microwave oven was invented by Percy L. Spencer.
* [Refrigerator](http://inventors.about.com/od/famousinventions/fl/The-History-of-the-Refrigerator-and-Freezers.htm)  
  Before mechanical refrigeration systems were introduced, people cooled their food with ice and snow, either found locally or brought down from the mountains.

### Small Kitchen Appliances

* Apple Parer  
  On February 14, 1803, the apple parer was patented by Moses Coates.
* [Blender](http://inventors.about.com/od/foodrelatedinventions/fl/The-History-of-the-Blender.htm)  
  In 1922, Stephen Poplawski invented the blender.
* [Cheese-Slicer](http://inventors.about.com/od/famousinventions/fl/Who-Invented-the-Cheese-Slicer.htm)  
  The cheese-slicer is a Norwegian invention.
* [Corkscrews](http://inventors.about.com/od/famousinventions/fl/The-History-of-the-Corkscrew.htm)  
  Corkscrew inventors were inspired by a tool called the bulletscrew or gun worm, a device that extracted stuck bullets from rifles.
* [Cuisinart](http://web.mit.edu/invent/iow/sontheimer.html)  
  Carl Sontheimer invented the Cuisinart food processor.
* [Eating Utensils](http://inventors.about.com/library/inventors/blbleating.htm)  
  The history of forks, sporks, knives, and spoons.
* [Green Garbage Bags](http://inventors.about.com/od/gstartinventions/a/garbage_bag.htm)  
  The familiar green plastic garbage bag (made from polyethylene) was invented by Harry Wasylyk in 1950.
* Electric Kettle  
  Arthur Leslie Large invented the electric kettle in 1922. General Electric introduced the electric kettle with an automatic cut-out in 1930.
* Weber Kettle Grill  
  George Stephen invented the original Weber Kettle Grill in 1951.
* Mason Jar  
  John Mason patented the screw neck bottle or the "Mason Jar" on November 30, 1858.
* Electric Mixers  
  The first patent that can claim to be for an electric mixer was issued on November 17, 1885 to Rufus M. Eastman. [Lillian Moller Gilbreth](http://inventors.about.com/library/inventors/blGilbreth.htm) (1878-1972), the mother of 12 children, also patented an electric food mixer (at a later date).
* [Mixmaster](http://web.mit.edu/invent/iow/jepson.html)  
  Ivar Jepson invented Sunbeam Mixmaster, which he patented in 1928, and first mass marketed in 1930.
* Paper Towels  
  The Scott Paper Company was founded in Philadelphia by Irvin and Clarence Scott in 1879. Brothers Seymour and Irvin Scott ran a paper commission business for twelve years, but the poor economy in the 1870s forced them out of business. Irvin and his younger brother, Clarence, then decided to form their own company out of the remains of the first. Irvin reportedly borrowed $2,000 from his father-in-law and added it to the $300 the two brothers had to form the capital of Scott Paper Company. In 1907, Scott Paper introduced the Sani-Towels paper towel, the first paper towels. They were invented for use in Philadelphia classrooms to help prevent the spread of the common cold from child to child.
* Peelers  
  The nineteenth-century created numerous kitchen use inventions: toasters, potato mashers, apple/potato peelers, food choppers and sausage stuffers were all invented. Over 185 patents for coffee grinders and over 500 patents for apple/potato peelers were patented in the 1800s. Early peelers were made of iron and the patent number and other information was included in the casting. Peelers ranged from the familiar and simple round swiveling rod with a knife blade that peeled skin, to contraptions full of gears and wheels that could peel, core, slice and section. There were separate peelers designed for different fruits and vegetables; there were even peelers that removed the kernels from ears of corn.
* Pressure Cooker  
  In 1679, French physicist Denis Papin invented the pressure cooker, called Papin's Digester, this airtight cooker produced a hot steam that cooked food more quickly while preserving nutrients.
* [Saran Wrap](http://inventors.about.com/od/famousinventions/fl/Saran-Wrap-The-History-of-PVDC.htm)  
  Saran polyvinylidene chloride or Saran resins and films (called PVDC) have been wrapping products for more than 50 years.
* [Soap and Detergents](http://inventors.about.com/od/famousinventions/fl/The-History-of-Soaps-and-Detergents.htm)  
  The history of soaps and detergents
* Squeegee  
  The single blade window cleaning squeegee was invented by Ettore Sceccone in 1936.
* [Toaster](http://inventors.about.com/od/famousinventions/fl/The-History-of-Your-Toaster.htm) Toasting bread began as a method of prolonging the life of bread. It was very common activity in [Roman times](http://ancienthistory.about.com/od/romanempire/g/102710-Roman-Empire.htm), 'tostum' is the [latin word](http://ancienthistory.about.com/od/latin/p/083109LatinEnglish.htm) for scorching or burning.
* [Tupperware](http://inventors.about.com/library/inventors/bltupperware.htm)  
  Tupperware, plastic containers with airtight lids, was invented by Earl Silas Tupper.
* Waffle Iron  
  The waffle iron was patented on August 24, 1869, invented by Cornelius Swarthout of Troy, New York. The patent (United States #94,xxx) described the invention as a "device to bake waffles.