



CURRENTS



THE OZ refrigerator from Electrolux is anything but a big, white box. Sometimes simple is just better.



THE GRO DESIGNS refrigerator, by Samsung "can be transformed from the traditional vertical orientation to a horizontal 'sideboard,' giving a stronger reference to furniture than a large domestic appliance."



The Newest COOL

What does your next refrigerator look like? More importantly, what will it do?

BY CHRISTINE HOLM

WHAT WE AFFECTIONATELY refer to today as "the fridge," our parents and grandparents called "the icebox." That's because what we use today literally started out in our ancestors' homes as a box of ice—often sunk underground—in which they stored perishable foods. Well, they tried to store perishable foods. Problem was, temperatures in such contraptions were hard to maintain, and the upshot was that the ice often perished pretty quickly (or was hard to get in the first place), and therefore, our great-great-grandparents ate a lot of spoiled foods.

The idea for something better was dreamed up in the 1700s but not put into anything like production until the late 1800s and early 1900s. Because these early models used highly toxic chemicals such as ammonia and methyl chloride, there were some fatalities (which didn't do much for marketing, much less appetite). Then came the discovery of Freon, and the world of refrigeration was launched; by the end of World War II, our love affair with the fridge (and ice as something that came out of it instead of something we put in it) really began in earnest.

Who wouldn't want something as juicy as this incredible red beauty from Godrej?

COOLER ENERGY

Problem is, we discovered that Freon harms the atmosphere. While modern refrigerators usually use HFC-134a as a refrigerant, which does not deplete the ozone layer, the older refrigerators still populating our kitchens remain a cause for concern; see epa.gov/ozone/title6/608/disposal/household.html for more information on how to dispose of them safely.

We also discovered that the older the refrigerator, generally the more energy it consumes. Erik Zsiga, media relations manager for AB Electrolux, says that Electrolux's best refrigerators today consume 70 percent less energy than the standard refrigerator 15 years ago did. "We have reached this by making parts like isolation, compressors, and cooling systems more efficient," he says. "In the life cycle of a refrigerator, the use phase stands for more than three quarters of the CO2 footprint. The most important impact Electrolux can do to prevent climate change is to develop and sell energy-efficient appliances."



↑ Amana says of their Quick Tap fridge: "The Quick Tap entertainment refrigerator is perfect for wherever you want to be able to grab a quick cold one. An exterior dispenser that can be filled with a variety of beverages and features like wine and can racks make it the perfect addition to any party."

THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME

Since we've eliminated the "ice" part, how about the "box" part of the refrigerator? For decades, we've been buying these rectangular steel boxes and plugging them into the wall. Granted, the box is more creative than ever, with gorgeous side-by-side, French-

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Owner, General Manager

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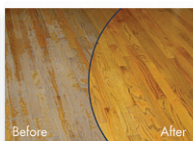
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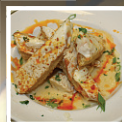
comes the Bio Robot Refrigerator by Yuriy Dmitriev, and here's what they say about it: "Four times smaller than a conventional refrigerator, the Bio Robot cools biopolymer gel through luminescence. Rather than shelves, the non-sticky, odorless gel morphs around products to create a separate pod that suspends items for easy access."

door, and freezer-on-the-bottom designs from Daewoo, Bosch, Aga, Whirlpool, Jenn Aire, Sub-Zero, and the new wunderkind on the block, Godrej (from India). The way our kitchens have been designed, the box often makes sense. But what, we wonder, does the refrigerator of the future look like?

"There is a difference between free-standing and built-in refrigerators," says Zsiga. "For free-standing fridges, there is an opportunity to get away from rectangular sizes to more individualized shapes. For built-ins, we work with a pre-existing kitchen environment, where it's also up to furniture makers and other interior designs. Rectangular will probably remain the shape, in those cases. However, for both free-standing and built-in, we might use several small modules rather than one big one, [with] more adaptation to individual needs." Some look more like furniture, like Samsung's GRO. Others are a little wavy. Other prototypes use green gel and look like something straight out of *The Jetsons*—21st-century style.

BEYOND STAINLESS

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But there will come a day—you know there will—when stainless appliances will give way to some other finish, some other color. That day could be today.

“A colorful appliance ... can easily transform a space for under \$800.”

—Monica Teague

A good case in point? Amana's Green Tea refrigerator. Not only does it sound yummy, it looks delicious in its cool green finish. Monica Teague, speaking for Amana/Whirlpool, says the company did its research before coming up with the fresh, new look. “In a survey Amana brand conducted with thekitchn.com, 21 percent of consumers said they preferred to decorate with green when choosing a color, with blue and red coming in second and third, respectively,” she says. “With so many decorating options, improving a kitchen or entertaining space may sometimes seem daunting. However, a colorful appliance, such as the Amana Green Tea refrigerator, can easily transform a space for under \$800.”

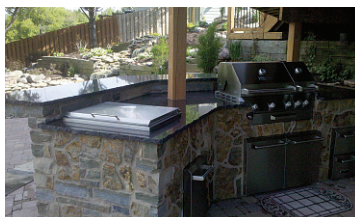
Very cool. But check out the many red, green, midnight blue, black, and even striped and other custom designs out there, too. With such a wonderful world of color from which to choose, you can start your own trend, the “newest cool.” ❁



↑ Amana's Green Tea refrigerator is not only gorgeous, it has plenty room with 17.6 cubic feet of energy-saving space.

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