



TAP INTO SAVINGS Project leader Joseph Pacella sets the temperature on the GE GSH25JFX, \$1,000, which is more efficient than its predecessor.

Refrigerators

Even as efficiency gains, energy issues remain

THE BEST MODELS among the 116 refrigerators in our latest report earn an appliance triple crown, thanks to their reasonable price tags, noteworthy overall performance, and superior energy efficiency. With appliance rebates going strong, now could be the right time to replace your old energy hog with one of our top picks.

Efficiency climbs. Manufacturers are offering more energy-saving refrigerators without jacking up the prices. The GE GSH25JFX[WW], \$1,000 (shown above), is one of the least expensive side-by-sides in our Ratings and among the most efficient. GE credits a high-efficiency motor and vacuum-insulated panels for that model's stingy energy use.

Innovative compressors are pumping up efficiency. The Samsung RF266AE[WP] bottom-freezer, \$1,500, gets a high mark for efficiency partly because of its variable-speed compressor, and an optimized compressor raises the efficiency of the Whirlpool Gold G9RXXFMW[Q] top-freezer, \$820.

But not every refrigerator in this report is an energy all-star. Our tough tests reveal

that some might use more electricity than other comparable models. (See "Energy Matters," page 39.)

Rebates are in effect. The Department of Energy's State Energy Efficient Appliance Rebate Program provides rebates of generally \$75 to \$250 for refrigerators that are at least Energy Star qualified. Energy Star units are footnoted in the Ratings. The rebates could still be available in states where cash for clunkers for appliances was launched in late 2009 or early 2010. More than 20 states, including California, Florida, and Pennsylvania, will dole out rebates starting in April or later. Find more details at www.ConsumerReports.org/clunkers.

If you missed out on a clunkers rebate, check for other incentives on the Database of State Incentives for Renewable Energy, at www.dsireusa.org, or on the Web sites of retailers and manufacturers such as Sears and Whirlpool.

How to choose

You'll want your new refrigerator to fit your lifestyle now and for years to come. If you're a young couple planning a family, look at

models you can grow into. If an empty nest is on the near horizon, size up smaller-capacity refrigerators.

Consider configuration. Top-freezers tend to be budget-friendly buys that are energy and space efficient, but their wide-swinging doors might make them a hard fit in some spots. Side-by-sides offer narrow door swings but usually have the least usable space. Bottom-freezers keep refrigerator items at eye level, and many come in the ever-popular French-door model. The trade-off is that you have to stoop to reach frozen items, and the freezers can be a hassle to organize. With their flush-with-the-cabinets style, built-ins deliver a unified look, though they're pricey and require a custom installation.

Factor in the features. Spend some time at the store examining features. Pull-out shelves and deep doors give you the most storage space. Through-the-door ice and water dispensers are a convenience, though they add to the price tag and overall energy use, and refrigerators with those add-ons tend to be more prone to repair. Plus replacement filters can be pricey. (See "Water Filters," page 33.) And remember, stainless-steel finishes provide a polished look but they usually cost more and can show fingerprints.

For more shopping advice, see our free buyer's guide to refrigerators at www.ConsumerReports.org/refrigerators.

CLOSE UP

Energy matters

Our refrigerator energy-use tests are different from and tougher than what the Department of Energy mandates. On average, in our tests energy use runs about 20 percent higher than what manufacturers indicate on their EnergyGuide labels. But the consumption we measured for a few models in this report went well beyond the norm.

The \$1,600 Maytag MSD2578VE[W] side-by-side we tested used 44 percent more electricity than is stated on its EnergyGuide label. One energy-boosting culprit appears to be its on-the-door beverage chiller. This enclosed bin has an adjustable vent that allows you to “keep your juice and milk colder,” Maytag says.

We adjusted the vent to the middle setting, in accordance with our testing standard for features with adjustable controls and the DOE’s testing guidelines. (With the vent fully open, that Maytag used 50 percent more electricity than indicated on the EnergyGuide label.) Only when the vent was fully closed did energy use approach what we’d have expected.

Other discrepancies

For the Viking Professional VCSB542, an \$8,000 built-in side-by-side, the maker indicates an energy use of 653 kilowatt-hours per year, but we measured 1,005 kWh on the model we tested. We attribute a significant portion of this difference to its Plasmacluster Ion Air Purifier, which Viking claims will eliminate airborne bacteria and keep food fresher longer. We didn’t test the performance of the air purifier, and on our model you can’t disable it.

The Blomberg BRFB1450 bottom-freezer, \$2,200, is energy hungry, even with its compact design and lack of features. Blomberg states an annual use of 440 kWh for this refrigerator, but the model we tested used 663 kWh. The BRFB1450 is among the least energy-efficient bottom-freezers in this report and one of the lowest scorers overall.

Given those as well as several other energy-use discrepancies that we’ve found in recent years, Consumers Union, the nonprofit publisher of *Consumer Reports*, urges the Energy Department to create refrigerator energy-use tests that ensure proper, uniform testing and better reflect typical operation.

What’s more, the DOE itself or an independent third-party organization should verify manufacturers’ claimed consumption figures, and the Federal Trade Commission should take action against manufacturers that knowingly understate energy use.

A2 Kenmore A5 LG B2 Whirlpool C2 Samsung D1 Jenn-Air

Recommendation	Rank	Brand & model	Price	Overall score	Test results			Capacity (cu. ft.)		Water dispenser	Energy cost/yr.	HxWxD (in.)
					Temp. performance	Energy efficiency	Noise	Ease of use	Claimed			
		Similar models, in small type, are comparable to tested models.		0								
				100								
				P								
				F								
				G								
				V								
				G								
				L								
				E								

C SIDE-BY-SIDES continued

✓	15	Kenmore Cold Spot 5942[2] ④	900	63	●	●	○	●	25.1	15.2	●	67	70x36x31
	16	Jenn-Air JCD2595WE[S] ② ③ ④	\$2,900	63	○	●	●	●	24.5	14.7	●	\$60	73x36x28
	17	LG LSC27910[SW] ③	1,100	62	●	○	●	●	26.5	16.6	●	95	70x36x32
	18	Whirlpool ED5FHAXV[Q] ③ ④	1,500	62	○	●	●	●	25.4	16.5	●	73	70x36x31
	19	Kenmore Pro 5533[3] ③	2,200	61	●	○	○	●	25.9	17.9	●	91	70x37x33
	20	GE GSHF6PGY[WW] ③ ④ GSH6PGY[]	1,450	60	○	●	○	●	25.8	16.2	●	75	71x36x33
	21	GE GSS25QGT[WW]	1,350	59	●	○	○	●	25.4	17.0	●	70	70x37x32
	22	Electrolux EI26SS55G[W] ③ ④	2,000	59	○	○	●	●	26.0	16.0	●	87	70x36x33
	23	Maytag MSD2578VE[W] ③ ④ MSD2576VE[], MSD2574VE[]	1,600	59	●	○	○	●	25.4	14.5	●	95	71x36x32
	24	Samsung RSG257AA[WP] ② ③ ④	2,000	58	●	●	●	●	24.1	13.7	●	96	70x36x28
	25	Hotpoint HSS25GFT[WW]	1,100	57	○	○	○	○	25.0	16.4	●	83	70x36x32
	26	Amana ASD2524VE[W] ③ ④	1,200	56	○	●	○	●	25.4	15.6	●	76	70x36x31
	27	Whirlpool ED5KVEXV[Q] ④ ED5DHEXW[]	900	55	○	●	○	●	25.1	15.3	●	72	70x36x31
	28	GE GSHL6PHX[LS] ③ ④ GSHF6PHX[WW]	1,800	55	○	○	○	○	25.9	17.4	●	77	70x36x33
	29	Amana ASD2522WR[W] ③ ④	800	54	○	●	○	●	25.1	15.6	●	73	70x36x31
	30	Whirlpool ED5DHEXW[Q] ③ ④ ED5LDEXW[]	1,000	54	○	●	○	●	25.1	15.2	●	71	70x36x31
	31	GE GSCS3KGY[SS] ② ③	2,000	52	●	●	○	●	22.7	12.9	●	81	70x36x28
	32	Electrolux EW26SS70W[] ③ ④ EW26SS65G[]	2,000	51	●	○	○	●	26.0	17.0	●	85	70x36x34
	33	Kenmore 5881[2] ③ ④ 5882[]	1,200	51	○	○	○	○	26.5	15.8	●	85	70x36x33
	34	Frigidaire Gallery FGH52669K[F] ③ ④ FGH52665K[], FGH52679K[], FGH52667K[]	1,500	50	○	○	○	○	26.0	16.8	●	85	70x36x33
	35	Kenmore 5736[2] ③	750	49	○	○	○	○	25.1	15.3	●	90	70x36x31
	36	Electrolux EW23CS65G[W] ② ③ ④	2,400	45	○	○	○	○	22.6	14.5	●	73	70x36x28

D BUILT-INS All are side-by-sides, except for French-door and regular bottom-freezers (footnoted).

✓	1	Jenn-Air JS42PPDUB[S] ③	7,200	80	●	●	●	●	25.3	17.3	●	71	84x42x26
	2	Sub-Zero BI425[S] ③	7,500	78	●	●	○	○	24.1	18.3	●	76	84x42x26
	3	Thermador KBU4265E[S] ③	8,000	77	●	○	○	○	25.2	16.0	●	75	84x42x26
	4	Miele KF1901Vi ③ ④ ⑤	7,200	76	●	○	○	○	18.3	14.0	●	63	83x36x24
✓	5	KitchenAid KBFC42F[SS] ① ③ KBFC42FT[], KBFO42FT[]	7,500	73	●	○	○	○	22.6	16.1	●	70	84x43x28
✓	6	Liebherr CS2062 ① ③ ④	5,000	72	●	○	○	○	19.5	13.6	●	49	81x36x25
	7	Liebherr CS1650[SS] ③ ⑤	4,200	72	●	○	○	○	15.4	13.0	●	51	82x30x26
	8	Sub-Zero BI36U[S] ③ ④ ⑤	7,700	71	●	○	○	○	21.2	15.6	●	72	84x35x26
✓	9	Electrolux Icon E42BS75EP[S] ③	7,600	65	●	○	○	○	25.2	17.2	●	93	84x42x26
	10	Viking DFSB423 ③ DDSB423[], VCSB423[]	6,600	65	●	○	○	○	24.0	16.6	●	74	83x43x25
	11	Thermador T36BT71FSE ① ③ ④	7,600	64	○	○	○	○	19.7	13.2	●	60	84x36x25
	12	Kenmore Pro 4048[3] ③ ④	6,500	62	●	○	○	○	29.5	19.5	●	105	84x48x26
	13	GE Monogram ZISP420DX[SS] ③ ④	8,400	61	○	○	○	○	25.5	16.1	●	79	84x42x27
	14	Sub-Zero 736T[SS] ③ ⑤	7,600	61	●	○	○	○	20.4	15.9	●	86	79x37x24
	15	KitchenAid KSSS36QT[X] ③	6,900	58	○	○	○	○	20.9	13.6	●	68	84x36x25
	16	Viking Professional VCSB542[SS] ③ VBS542[], DFSB542[], DDSB542[]	8,000	44	○	○	○	○	24.0	17.1	●	115	83x42x26

① French-door. ② Cabinet-depth. ③ Stainless/stainless-look option available. ④ Energy Star qualified. ⑤ Regular bottom-freezer.

capacity is maker’s total cubic-foot measurement. **Usable capacity** is our measurement of total usable space. **Water dispenser** indicates feature is standard. **HxWxD** are w/out handle, rounded up to nearest inch; height includes hinges, but they’re forward of standard wall cabinets. Under **brand & model**, bracketed letters/numbers are color codes. **Price** is approx. retail; includes icemaker, if available. Built-in prices don’t include optional exterior panels.

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