

# BUILDING TOOLS



## Let your contractor buy the appliances

BY RICHARD MORRISON

If you're in the midst of a kitchen remodeling you will soon face a dilemma. After hours of visiting appliance showrooms, comparing appliances and finding the best deal, should you go ahead and place a deposit with the dealer of choice (who is undoubtedly having an incredible special sale that ends Sunday)? Or should you just tell your contractor which appliances you want, letting the contractor purchase them, and risk a higher price?

After many kitchen remodelings, using both scenarios, I've come out solidly in favor of letting the contractor purchase the appliances. Or at the very least, being put in charge of directly coordinating the order, delivery and installation.

First, the savings obtained by the homeowner doing the purchasing are usually meager. Appliance sales is a very competitive business and most suppliers are generally very close in price. Contractors often have suppliers they work with on a frequent basis and get better prices than a homeowner can get.

Second, the contractor loses control of the schedule when the supplier is not answering directly to the contractor. When delays are caused by incorrect or late deliveries, if you've purchased the appliances yourself, the contractor may justly be entitled to extra money for the delay. If the contractor does the purchasing, those are the contractor's headaches to deal with.

Third, if there are problems with the appliances, you've got two lines of defense: the contractor and the supplier. Otherwise, you have just one—the supplier. Repairing or sending back a

defective double oven one month after it's been installed is not a pleasant prospect for homeowners to deal with on their own.

Last, by letting the contractor purchase the appliances, you avoid problems of responsibility for damaged or defective appliances. Imagine coming into your about-to-be-complete kitchen and noticing that your new

cooktop is chipped on a corner. Did it come that way (as your contractor will claim) or was the damage caused during the installation (as the supplier will claim)? If the contractor did the purchasing, it won't be your problem to sort out.

Here's a cautionary (and true) tale: My clients purchased their own refrigerator "to save the contractor's markup." After the installation, the icemaker water line started leaking onto the hardwood floor, causing thousands of dollars of buckled flooring that had to be replaced. The contractor claimed it was a defective valve on the refrigerator. The appliance dealer claimed the installation by the contractor was incorrect.

My clients couldn't really figure out who was at fault, but they had a very expensive floor problem to correct, which no one was willing to pay for. If they had let the contractor buy and install the refrigerator, all of the problems would have

been the contractor's to deal with. ♦

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