



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.

Ratings Refrigerators

In performance order, within types. (Types designated A, B, etc.)



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

A TOP-FREEZERS

1	GE Profile PTS22LHS[WW] ③ PTS22SHS[]	\$1,400	73	● ● ● ● ●	21.7 17.1	● \$62 68x33x32
2	Kenmore 7930[2] ③ ④	960	72	● ● ● ● ●	22.0 15.1	● 54 68x33x33
3	Kenmore 7531[2] ③ ④	1,250	71	● ● ● ● ●	22.0 17.2	● 50 68x33x33
4	Maytag MITXEMMW[W] ③ ④	750	71	● ● ● ● ●	21.0 16.5	55 67x33x30
5	LG LTC22350[SW] ④	850	70	● ● ● ● ●	22.0 17.3	53 68x33x33
6	Frigidaire Professional Gallery FPHI2187K[F] ③ ④ FGHT2146K[], FGHT2144K[]	900	67	● ● ● ● ●	20.6 16.3	57 69x30x32
7	Whirlpool Gold G9RXXFMW[Q] ③ ④ W9RXXFMW[]	820	67	● ● ● ● ●	18.9 14.5	48 67x30x32
8	GE GTH18KBX[WW] ④	1,000	64	● ● ● ● ●	17.9 15.3	58 67x30x32
9	Haier PRTS21SAC[W] ③ ④	600	64	● ● ● ● ●	20.7 15.3	58 67x32x32
10	Kenmore 7997[2] 6997[] ④	750	62	● ● ● ● ●	19.0 14.8	50 66x30x33
11	IKEA Energisk B18 W ③	500	60	● ● ● ● ●	17.6 13.7	50 69x28x32
12	Frigidaire FRT21S6A[W] FRT21S6J[]	680	58	● ● ● ● ●	20.5 16.8	64 70x30x33
13	Frigidaire FRT18S6A[W] FRT18S6J[]	600	57	● ● ● ● ●	18.2 14.5	65 67x30x31
14	Haier RRTG18PAA[W] RRTG18PAB[]	550	53	● ● ● ● ●	18.2 13.1	62 66x30x31
15	Hotpoint HTS18GCS[WW]	550	50	● ● ● ● ●	18.2 13.7	60 68x28x30
16	Estate T8TXNGFW[Q] T8RXNGFW[], T8TXNFWW[]	580	45	● ● ● ● ●	17.6 13.4	55 68x28x30
17	GE GTH21KCX[WW] ④	850	41	● ● ● ● ●	21.0 16.6	53 67x33x31
18	Amana A8RXNGMW[H] ② ③ A8WXXNGFW[]	650	40	● ● ● ● ●	17.6 13.4	52 69x28x31

B BOTTOM-FREEZERS Includes French-door and cabinet-depth models (footnoted).

1	Kenmore Elite 7759[2] ① ③ ④	1,750	82	● ● ● ● ●	24.8 17.1	● 54 71x36x34
2	Whirlpool Gold GX5FHTXV[Q] ① ③ ④ GX5FHDXXV[]	1,700	82	● ● ● ● ●	24.8 16.2	● 58 70x36x33
3	Samsung RF266AE[WP] ① ③ ④ RF263AE[]	1,500	79	● ● ● ● ●	25.8 17.4	● 63 70x36x34
4	LG LFX28977[SW] ① ③	2,400	79	● ● ● ● ●	28.0 17.9	● 78 70x36x33
5	Samsung RFG298AA[WP] ① ③ ④	2,500	78	● ● ● ● ●	28.5 18.1	● 86 70x36x33
6	Kenmore Elite 7978[2] ① ③	2,400	77	● ● ● ● ●	28.0 15.2	● 74 70x36x33
7	Amana AFI2538AE[W] ① ③	1,800	75	● ● ● ● ●	24.9 14.8	● 69 71x36x32
8	LG LDC22720[SW] ③ ④	1,100	75	● ● ● ● ●	22.4 15.8	59 69x33x33
9	Maytag MFT2771WE[W] ① ③ ④	2,300	74	● ● ● ● ●	26.6 15.6	● 60 71x36x33
10	Amana ABB2221FE[W] ③	950	74	● ● ● ● ●	21.9 15.0	64 70x33x32
11	Electrolux Wave Touch EW28BS71[IS] ① ③ ④ EI28BS60[]	3,100	73	● ● ● ● ●	27.8 18.6	● 72 70x36x34
12	Kenmore Elite 7873[3] ① ③	2,700	73	● ● ● ● ●	25.0 15.9	● 90 70x36x32
13	Amana AFD2535DE[W] ① ③	1,500	73	● ● ● ● ●	25.1 17.5	● 58 70x36x32
14	Jenn-Air JFC2290VE[S] ① ② ③ ④	2,800	73	● ● ● ● ●	21.8 13.6	● 54 72x36x28
15	Maytag MFF2258VE[W] ① ③ ④	1,400	73	● ● ● ● ●	21.7 14.5	60 71x33x32
16	Electrolux EI23BC56[IW] ① ② ③ ④ EW23BC71[]	2,800	73	● ● ● ● ●	22.6 14.8	● 69 70x36x29
17	GE Profile PGSS5PJX[SS] ① ③ PGSS5PJZ[SS]	2,400	72	● ● ● ● ●	24.9 15.7	● 69 70x36x33
18	GE Profile PFSS5NFY[WW] ① ③ ④ PFSS5NFZ[], PFSS5NFZ[]	1,850	72	● ● ● ● ●	25.1 15.7	66 71x36x33
19	Maytag MBF1956KE[W] ③ ④	1,300	72	● ● ● ● ●	18.5 13.3	58 67x30x31
20	GE Profile PFSS5PKY[SS] ① ③ ④	2,500	72	● ● ● ● ●	28.5 18.0	● 87 70x36x34
21	GE GFSF2KEX[WW] ① ③ GFSF2KEY[]	1,500	72	● ● ● ● ●	22.1 15.2	62 70x33x32
22	Viking VCF136[SS] ① ② ③ ④	3,200	71	● ● ● ● ●	19.6 12.8	● 63 70x36x28

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

Overview

The best models keep temperatures consistent and are energy efficient.

CR Best Buy

These recommended models offer the best combination of performance and price.

Recommended

These are high-performing models that stand out for the reasons below.

Notable top-freezers:

- A2** Kenmore \$960
- A4** Maytag \$750 **CR Best Buy**
- A5** LG \$850
- A6** Frigidaire \$900
- A7** Whirlpool \$820 **CR Best Buy**
- A10** Kenmore \$750

Quiet **A2** has internal water dispenser. **A4** and **A5** excel at efficiency. **A6** delivers solid temperature performance. **A7** is available in stainless. **A10** is reliable and inexpensive.

Best bottom-freezers:

- B1** Kenmore \$1,750
- B2** Whirlpool \$1,700 **CR Best Buy**
- B3** Samsung \$1,500
- B5** Samsung \$2,500
- B9** Maytag \$2,300
- B10** Amana \$950 **CR Best Buy**
- B13** Amana \$1,500 **CR Best Buy**
- B14** Jenn-Air \$2,800

B1, B2, and **B3** combine even temperature with high efficiency. **B5** has two icemakers. **B9** has external ice and water. **B10** is non-French-door. **B13** has lots of usable space. **B14** is cabinet-depth.

Stand-out side-by-sides:

- C1** Whirlpool \$1,800
- C2** Samsung \$1,300 **CR Best Buy**
- C3** GE \$1,000 **CR Best Buy**
- C6** Whirlpool \$2,100
- C7** Maytag \$1,300
- C8** Frigidaire \$1,000 **CR Best Buy**
- C14** Kenmore \$900

All have external ice and water. **C1** and **C3** are very efficient. **C2** is spacious, quiet, and efficient. **C6** is a cabinet-depth model. **C7** provides spill-proof shelves. **C8** has fine temperature performance. **C14** is less expensive still but noisier.

Finest built-ins:

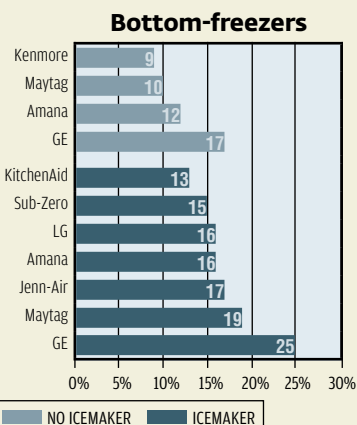
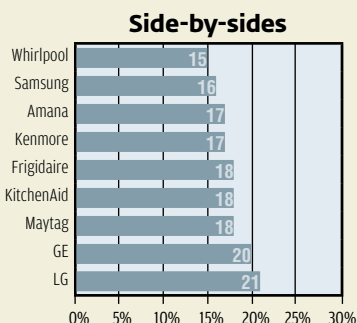
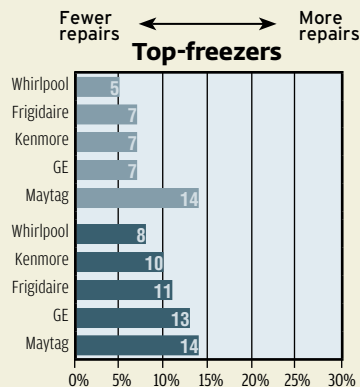
- D1** Jenn-Air \$7,200
- D5** KitchenAid \$7,500
- D6** Liebherr \$5,000
- D9** Electrolux \$7,600

D1 is quiet and efficient. **D5** and **D6** are French-door models. **D9** is a roomy side-by-side.

For Guide to the Ratings, see page 38.

Most and least reliable

Maytag has been the most repair-prone brand of top-freezers without an icemaker; GE, the most repair-prone bottom-freezer brand. No side-by-side or top-freezer brand with an icemaker stood out. That's what 86,500 readers who bought a fridge between 2005 and 2009 told us. The graphs show the percentage of each brand's models that needed repair or had a serious problem. Differences of fewer than 5 points aren't meaningful; data are adjusted to eliminate differences linked solely to a refrigerator's age. Models within a brand might vary, and design or manufacture changes could affect future reliability. Choosing a brand with a good repair history can improve your odds of getting a reliable model.



Source: Annual Product Reliability Survey, Consumer Reports National Research Center.

Ratings Refrigerators

In performance order, within types. (Types designated A, B, etc.)

● Excellent
● Very good
○ Good
● Fair
● Poor

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

B BOTTOM-FREEZERS continued

23	LG	LFX25975[SW]	1 3	\$2,100	71							25.0	15.3		•	\$76	70x36x33
24	Amana	ABB1921DE[W]		900	70							18.5	13.4			67	69x30x31
25	GE	GFSF2HCY[WW]	1 3 4	GFS2HCY[I]	1,200	69						22.0	15.2			55	70x33x33
26	Maytag	Ice20 MFI2569VE[W]	1 3 4		1,800	69						24.9	14.9		•	71	70x36x36
27	Samsung	RF217AB[WP]	1 3 4		1,200	69						19.7	14.7			65	70x32x31
28	Whirlpool	Gold G15FSAVX[Q]	1 3 4	G15FVAXV[I], G15SVAXV[I]	2,000	68						24.9	14.9		•	70	71x36x33
29	Maytag	MFI2269VE[W]	1 3 4		2,000	68						21.8	12.8		•	70	71x33x32
30	Samsung	RB197AB[WP]	2 3 4		1,200	67						18.7	13.1			67	70x32x28
31	Whirlpool	Gold G17FVCXW[Q]	1 3 4		2,300	67						26.6	15.6		•	69	71x36x33
32	LG	LFC20760[SW]	1 3 4		1,200	67						19.6	13.7			69	69x30x32
33	Whirlpool	Gold GX2FHDVXV[Q]	1 3 4	GX2SHDXV[I]	1,400	66						21.7	13.8			70	70x33x32
34	GE	GB5COHBX[WW]	4		900	65						20.3	14.7			57	68x30x33
35	LG	LFX21975[ST]	1 2 3		2,800	61						21.0	12.4		•	94	70x36x28
36	LG	LMX28987[ST]	1 3		3,300	60						28.0	14.0		•	96	70x36x34
37	Maytag	MFC2061HE[W]	1 2 3		2,000	59						19.6	14.2		•	78	71x36x27
38	Kenmore	7973[7]	1 2 3		2,700	58						21.0	12.4		•	96	70x36x28
39	Maytag	Ice20 MFI2067AE[W]	1 2 3		2,500	58						19.8	12.1		•	86	71x36x28
40	GE	Profile PFSF6PKX[WW]	1 3 4		2,000	53						25.8	16.6		•	107	70x36x33
41	Kenmore	7840[2]	1 3 4		1,800	52						22.5	14.2		•	142	70x33x32
42	Haier	PBF521EDA[S]	1 2 3 4		1,800	50						20.6	14.2		•	149	70x36x28
43	LG	LBC22518[WW]	3	LBC22520[I]	900	48						22.4	17.4			99	69x33x32
44	Fisher & Paykel	RF201ADUX	1 2 3		2,500	45						20.1	13.3		•	71	71x36x28
45	Fisher & Paykel	ES22B	2 3		1,500	42						17.3	11.3			73	67x32x28
46	Blomberg	BRFB1450	2 3		2,200	37						13.8	11.1			76	76x28x25

C SIDE-BY-SIDES Includes cabinet-depth models.

✓ 1	Whirlpool	Gold GS5VHAXW[Q] 3 4	1,800	78	● ● ● ●	25.7 16.0	●	64	70x36x33
✓ 2	Bosch	Linea 800 B22CS80SN[S] 2 3 4 B22CS50SN[I]	2,700	76	● ● ● ●	21.7 14.6	●	72	69x36x28
✓ 3	Samsung	RS275AC[WP] 3 4	1,300	71	● ● ● ●	26.5 18.4	●	84	70x37x34
✓ 4	GE	GSH25JFX[WW] 3 4	1,000	71	● ● ● ●	25.3 16.3	●	64	70x36x32
5	Whirlpool	Gold GD5DHAXV[Q] 3 4	1,300	71	● ● ● ●	25.6 16.6	●	77	70x36x31
6	GE	Café CSH55UGX[SS] 3 4	2,300	70	● ● ● ●	25.4 15.3	●	73	70x36x32
✓ 7	Whirlpool	Gold GC3SHAXV[Q] 2 3 4	2,100	69	● ● ● ●	23.1 14.2	●	64	70x36x28
✓ 8	Maytag	MSD2550VE[W] 3 4	1,300	68	● ● ● ●	25.1 16.6	●	76	70x36x31
✓ 9	Frigidaire	FRS6HF55K[W] 4	1,000	67	● ● ● ●	26.0 17.4	●	80	70x36x33
10	Kenmore	Elite 5044[2] 3 4	2,300	67	● ● ● ●	25.1 15.3	●	70	70x36x32
11	GE	Profile PSDF5YGX[WW] 2 3 4	3,500	66	● ● ● ●	24.6 14.1	●	75	73x36x28
12	LG	LSC2792I[SW] 3 4	1,400	66	● ● ● ●	26.5 15.1	●	78	70x36x33
13	GE	GSHF9NGY[WW] 4 GSH59NGY[I], DSHF9NGY[I], DSH59NGY[I]	1,450	65	● ● ● ●	29.1 17.2	●	71	70x36x34
14	Kenmore	Elite 5996[2] 3 4	1,600	65	● ● ● ●	25.5 16.2	●	82	70x36x31

Guide to the Ratings

Overall score is temp. performance and energy efficiency; **noise** and **ease of use** are also considered. Displayed scores are rounded; models are in order of precise overall score. **Temp. performance** is performance at different room temperatures and how uniformly each maintained 37° F in fridge and 0° F in freezer. **Energy efficiency** is electricity use based on our measurements and usable capacity. **Noise** is with compressor running. **Claimed**



A2 Kenmore



A5 LG



B2 Whirlpool



C2 Samsung



D1 Jenn-Air

	Brand & model	Price	Overall score	Test results	Capacity (cu. ft.)	
Recommendation	Rank	Similar models, in small type, are comparable to tested models.	0100 P I F G V G E	Temp. performance Energy efficiency Noise Ease of use	Claimed Usable	Water dispenser Energy cost/yr. HxWxD (in.)

C SIDE-BY-SIDES continued

✓	15	Kenmore Cold Spot 5942[2] ④	900	63	● ● ○ ●	25.1 15.2	● 67	70x36x31
	16	Jenn-Air JCD2595WE[2] 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 GSHF6PGV[WW] ③ ④ GSH6PGV[]	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 ED5KVEV[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 EW26SS70I[W] 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 FGHS2669K[F] ③ ④ FGHS2669K[], FGHS2679K[], FGHS2667K[]	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[SS] ③	7,200	80	● ● ● ●	25.3 17.3	● 71	84x42x26
	2	Sub-Zero BI42S[] ③	7,500	78	● ● ● ●	24.1 18.3	● 76	84x42x26
	3	Thermador KBUDT4265E[] 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[] ③ ④ ⑤	7,700	71	● ○ ○ ●	21.2 15.6	● 72	84x35x26
✓	9	Electrolux Icon E42BS75EP[] ③	7,600	65	● ○ ● ●	25.2 17.2	● 93	84x42x26
	10	Viking DFSB423 ③ DDBS423[], 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 736TC[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 VIBS542[], DFSB542[], DDBS542[]	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.

▶ 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.

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