

# Home & Heart



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I've had several e-queries, asking if I still love my Staber horizontal-axis washing machine. Also, readers have been asking what I know about energy efficient clothes dryers. Since I am not able to test all the different brands of appliances, I will share with you the choices I have made, and why.

## Staber First

Yes, I still love my Staber washing machine. It was sent to me to test in 1995. The machine I have was already on the west coast, and was being returned because of a dent on the side. Staber rerouted it to me so I could run a real-life, off-grid test. After I used it (see *HP47 TtW!*), I was not willing to let go of it. Rather than ship it back to Ohio, I bought it.

At the time, the Staber was the only super-efficient washer on the market. Since then, other manufacturers have developed and are selling clothes washers just as frugal with electricity and water. The Staber, however, is the only washer that retains its guarantee while being used on an inverter-based power system.

The only problem I have had with my Staber is a broken belt. We called Staber and they immediately sent out a replacement, free. I have heard from other Staber owners, and they are effusive in their praise of the machine and the company.

A caution: Frank at Crystal Pines Renewable Energy says the Frigidaire Gallery washer, a super-efficient front loading washer, will not run on any inverter power but full sine wave. Although the warranty on most appliances do not specify RE systems as grounds for invalidation, it would be a "don't ask, don't tell" situation. Kind of like guerrilla housewife. Hey, I like that.

## Hung Out to Dry

On the subject of super-efficient clothes dryers, I have to admit that the absolute best for resource use is the sun. The problem is that the sun is not always available to use. Sure you may have a wood stove, so you could



Frigidaire Gallery stackable gas dryer.

string your laundry around your house. I am here to tell you that that gets really old, really fast. Sun drying is a seasonal option at best.

## Dryer History

When my parents retired to Paradise (California, that is), they gave me their old gas clothes dryer. My dad got me the small orifice which was needed to adapt the dryer from town gas (natural gas) to country gas (propane). Bob-O and I remodeled the basement bathroom into a laundry room. The toilet in there never did flush properly. We were always afraid someone would try to use it, so we removed it. The dryer was a nondescript brand and model. I don't even remember what it was. But it was certainly old—I do remember that.

It did dry the clothes. But you had to run it through two 50 minute cycles to get one load of clothes dry. I was resigned to this. I thought maybe it had something to do with the fact that I was using propane, although I really didn't know why. Then my cousin Denise told me that her old dryer did the exact same thing. She lives in town and uses grid power and natural gas. It wasn't the gas; it was the age of the machine.

After that revelation, I was determined to get a new dryer. Of course I had to shop for one. The dryer I dreamed of was of the stacking variety. It had to fit in the corner of my tiny laundry room. I wanted it to stack on top of a home-built cabinet, which I could use for storage.

You see, three walls of our basement are surrounded by earth. The fourth wall is cinder block up to about waist high, and wood above. Since the dryer exhaust pipe had to go through the wood to the outside, my old dryer had to be away from the wall about six inches to allow room for the vent hose. I was crouching in a doorway of the tiny room to load and retrieve the laundry from the dryer. A stacking dryer could be vented straight through the wall, so it would be six inches farther back from the door. It would also be high enough that I could stand up straight to load and unload it.

### High & Dry

I began looking at dryers whenever I was even close to an appliance store. If I saw a stacking dryer in an advertisement, I would coax Bob-O into at least looking at it. The problem was that appliance manufacturers seem to think they really have a valuable item in a gas dryer. They are always more expensive than a watt-sucking 220 VAC model. And when you add the attraction of being stackable, they really raise the cost.

Bob-O was quite sly about getting me a dryer for my birthday. I really didn't have a clue that he had ordered one. It is a Frigidaire Gallery model, with its orifice changed for propane. Bob-O made me a cabinet to put it up on, and Joe Schwartz modified the base to my specifications. I couldn't be happier with it.

It has a moisture sensor, and just dries the clothes until they're done. It uses half the electricity of the old one, about 272 watt-hours per load, using our Trace 4024 sine wave inverter. That may seem like a lot of electricity, but like many gas-fired appliances these days, it uses an electric glow bar to heat the thermocouple. In the winter we are on hydro power, and it is not a drain on our system. If we are producing power and not using it, we're wasting it.

An added bonus of using a dryer is the lint trap. The Staber washer does not have a lint trap. By drying the clothes in a dryer, I am able to remove what lint there is.

### How Dry I Am

If it sounds like I am rationalizing having a really great new clothes dryer, well, I am. I only have to go downstairs once instead of twice. I am not crouching in the doorway. My new cabinet has a shelf that pulls out to hold the laundry basket while I load and unload the dryer. I love it. I am very much into planning and outfitting our home for our old age. With a little care, this dryer will serve us a long time.

### Access

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