

Ducted vs Recirculating Cooker Hoods: Which Removes Smells?

By [DirectHome Editorial](#)

Updated 16 September 2026

9 min read

[Explore our kitchen renovation service](#) ↗

Both arrangements can reduce cooking smells, but they do different things with the air. A ducted hood carries captured cooking air, odours and moisture outside. A recirculating hood uses an odour filter, usually activated carbon, then returns the air to the kitchen. For frequent frying and lingering steam, we recommend examining a suitable outdoor duct route first; where that route is impractical, choose recirculation with effective, maintainable odour filtration and room ventilation.

Need advice for your home?

[WhatsApp our team](#) ↗



A [landed kitchen renovation](#) gives you an opportunity to plan the hood's extraction or recirculation arrangement alongside the cabinets and ceiling. It also exposes the cost of a preferred cooking position. A hob on an island may suit the room beautifully, but the hood above it still needs a workable installation and a way to reach its serviceable parts.

Where do the cooking smells go?

Catching grease, reducing smells and removing moisture are different tasks.

Part of the arrangement	What it does	What it does not replace
Grease filter	Catches grease carried in cooking fumes.	A separate odour filter in a recirculating setup.
Activated-carbon odour filter	Retains odour molecules as air passes through.	Room ventilation or disposal of cooking moisture outdoors.
Outdoor extraction duct	Carries captured cooking air, moisture and odours outside.	A hood that captures fumes effectively at the hob.

A grease filter catches grease carried in the cooking fumes. It is not a substitute for an odour filter. In a recirculating arrangement, [activated carbon holds odour molecules on its large internal surface](#), a process called adsorption. The air passes through and returns to the room with less odour when the filter is suitable, correctly fitted and still effective.

That carbon has finite capacity. As the filter loads up, odour removal can weaken; without the specified odour filter, captured smells can be sent straight back into the kitchen. Cleaning the metal grease filter does not restore a spent disposable carbon filter. Follow the actual model's instructions for [carbon-filter replacement](#); some systems have a specifically regenerable filter, but a washable grease filter does not make every carbon filter washable.

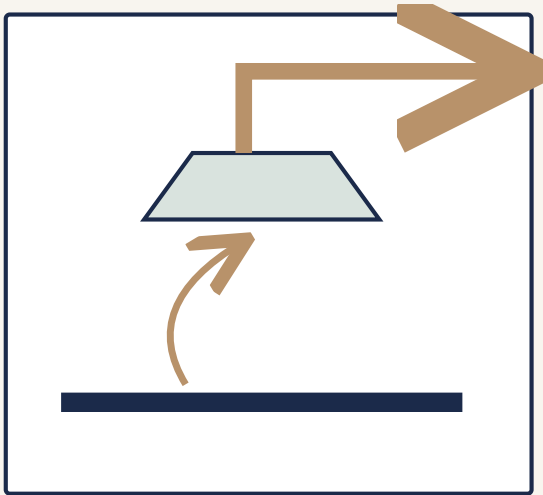
With [ducted extraction](#), [the captured air leaves the building with its moisture and odours](#). This avoids relying on a recirculation filter to retain those smells inside the appliance. The hood still has to catch the fumes, and the duct must carry them to a suitable outdoor outlet. Smells that escape around the hood remain in the room, so an external duct cannot guarantee an odour-free kitchen.

Recirculation does not provide that outdoor escape for cooking moisture. A room can therefore smell better while still feeling humid after boiling or steaming. Plan ventilation for the room as well as odour filtration at the hob. Neither a high airflow number nor an expensive filter on its own resolves all three tasks: catching the fumes, reducing smells and managing moisture.

Follow the air beyond the hood

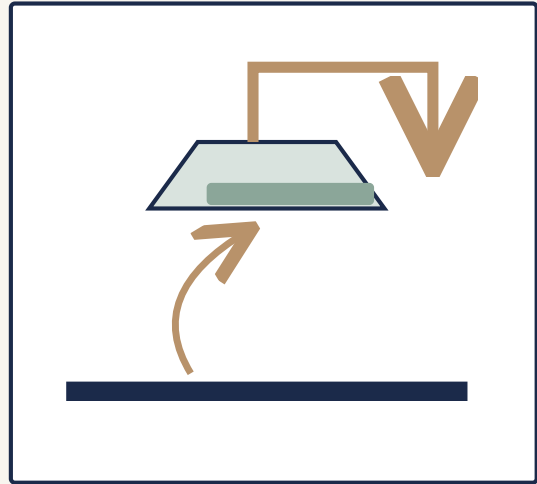
Where will the cooking air go?

Ducted



Air goes outside

Recirculating



Air returns to room

Conceptual routes; the selected manual determines the installation.

Two conceptual routes. Duct sizes, clearances, outlets and filter arrangements must follow the selected appliance and site design.

Show the chosen air route beyond the hood on the kitchen drawing, using the [appliance's installation requirements](#). For a ducted arrangement, follow the duct to its outdoor outlet. For recirculation, show where filtered air leaves the cabinet. Hiding the hood behind a neat cabinet front does not resolve either route.

Ask the installer to trace the full route on the plan and in section. For ducted extraction, that means the path from the appliance through the proposed cabinets, ceiling or wall to an appropriate external termination. For recirculation, it means the specified conversion components, filter position and unobstructed return path. Neither route is complete when the drawing ends at the top of the hood.

The external end deserves attention before the room layout is fixed. Where does it sit relative to openings, neighbouring property and parts of the house people use? Who confirms that the proposed opening and discharge arrangement are appropriate? Those site questions may make a different hob position worthwhile before there is any reason to change the preferred appliance.

Want an exact price for your home?

Ranges only go so far. WhatsApp us a photo of your space and we'll quote your actual job. No obligation.

Compare the two routes for the same kitchen

Compare complete configurations for the same hob and room. Effective odour reduction depends on capture, the air route and filter condition; this is not a measured performance ranking.

Decision	Ducted arrangement	Recirculating arrangement
Where air goes	An agreed route discharges it outside	Filtered air returns to the room
What happens to captured smells	Odour-bearing air goes outdoors	Odour molecules are retained by the specified filter; remaining air returns indoors
What happens to moisture	Captured moisture is discharged outdoors with the air	Cooking moisture remains a room-ventilation concern
If smells remain	Check capture at the hob, grease filter, duct and outlet	Check capture, correct odour-filter installation and whether the filter needs replacement or specified regeneration
Building work to establish	Duct route, opening, termination and reinstatement	Required cabinet provisions and return-air route
Equipment to identify	Hood and the specified extraction components	Hood, compatible conversion kit and specified filters
Access to preserve	Filters and any components needing service on the route	Filters and the parts needed for the chosen return arrangement
Unresolved question	Can the full route be built as intended?	Does the chosen configuration suit the household and room?

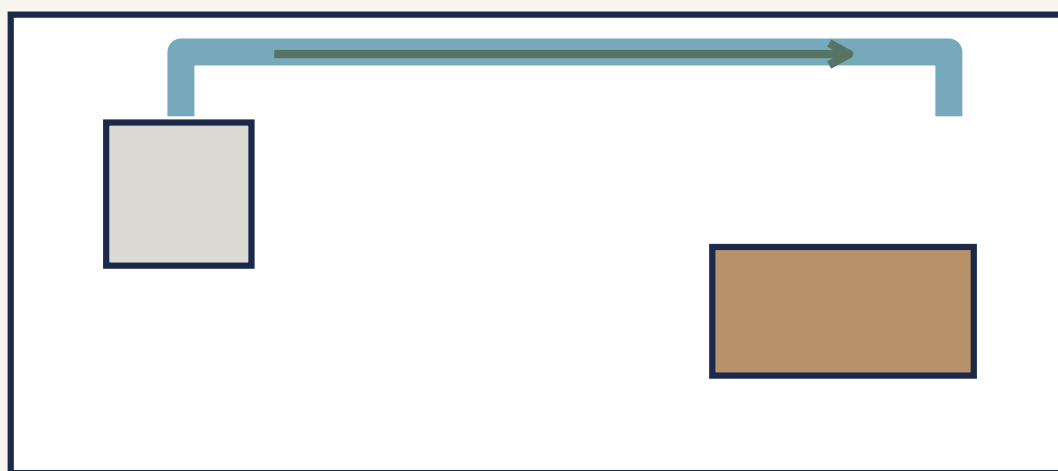
A short, straightforward outdoor route is a strong reason to examine extraction first. If the only plausible route crosses several finished rooms, requires an awkward external opening or cannot be accommodated in the retained building, ask what moving the hob would solve. Compare that revision with recirculation before treating the original island or wall position as fixed.

Recirculation can be a considered choice for a retained kitchen where disruptive duct work is difficult. It still needs a supported appliance configuration, usable filter access and a room-ventilation discussion. Do not interpret the absence of an external duct as proof that no further coordination is needed.

If frequent frying sends smells towards an open dining room and a suitable outdoor route is available, ducted extraction has the useful advantage of removing captured air and moisture from the home. If a retained kitchen has no workable duct route, recirculation can still reduce odours when its filter and airflow suit the appliance. Choose it with access and consumable costs in mind, rather than accepting a hood that only moves the cooking smell from the hob to the rest of the room.

Bring the way you cook into the comparison

Cooking and room boundaries work together



Assess the actual air arrangement

Assess the hood with the cooking pattern and room boundaries it will serve.

Describe what happens at the hob: the vessels used, whether more than one burner or zone runs at a time, and whether the household frequently fries or mainly reheats. These are inputs for selecting and positioning the equipment. A photograph of the kitchen style cannot communicate them, and a maximum airflow figure alone does not show how a proposed installation will perform around your cooking.

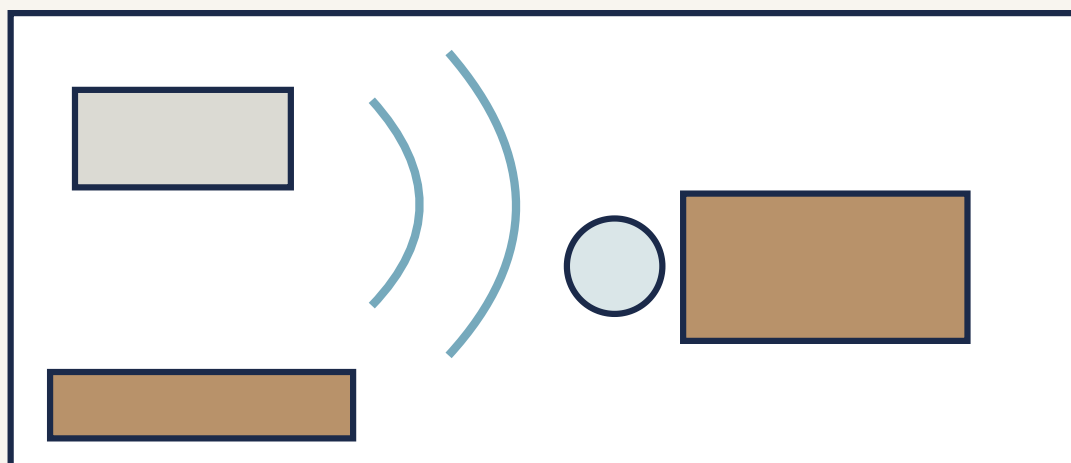
Also describe the room boundaries. A kitchen open to the dining area creates a different everyday concern from a room that can be closed during cooking. If a sliding partition is proposed, review the hood and room ventilation in that operating arrangement. The point is to test the room you will actually use, rather than a plan with every door shown conveniently open.

Ask how replacement air will enter when an extraction hood operates. The installation guidance identifies incoming air as part of an extraction arrangement, but the solution belongs to the actual building and appliance combination. Where other fuel-burning equipment is relevant, have the

responsible professionals assess the interaction rather than improvising an opening or assuming the hood works independently.

Hear the arrangement you are considering

Hear the hood from the place you sit



Match the mode and setting being compared

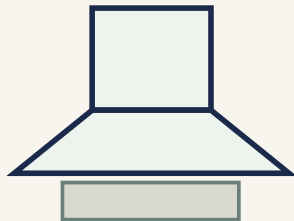
Listen from the occupied position at a comparable mode and operating setting.

Compare sound information for the same operating mode and setting wherever available. A quiet low setting does not tell you what the household will hear at the setting needed during cooking. Likewise, a showroom demonstration establishes how that demonstration sounded; its duct, room and mounting may differ from the proposed kitchen.

Use the demonstration to judge what bothers you. Can someone at the dining table follow a conversation, and is the control easy to reach while cooking? Then ask the installer how the proposed route and mounting differ. This keeps a useful listening test in the decision without turning a brief visit into a prediction of the finished room.

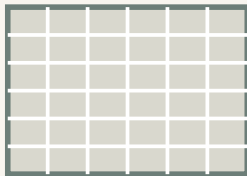
Try the filter-removal movement before approving the cabinet

A filter has to leave the cabinet



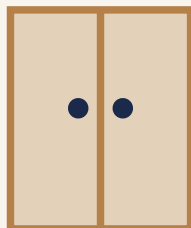
Open the normal access

Use the selected hood arrangement.



Follow removal movement

Check the filter clears the enclosure.



Keep the route available

Cabinetry should preserve the service movement.

Open the normal access: Use the selected hood arrangement. Follow removal movement: Check the filter clears the enclosure. Keep the route available: Cabinetry should preserve the service movement. Schematic only; no dimensions or site-specific approval are implied.

A maintenance promise is easier to assess with the access shown. Ask which filters are cleaned, which are replaced and which instructions apply to the selected configuration. Get the exact consumable references and confirm who supplies them locally. Do not put a generic filter-change interval into the household calendar until the actual manual and use conditions are known.

Look at the action required to remove the filter. Can the relevant panel open fully, can the filter clear the cabinet edge, and is there a sensible place to handle it? A decorative trim or cupboard shelf should not occupy a space the service procedure requires. Demonstrate this with the selected hood or have the installer show its documented removal route before fabrication.

The same discussion should establish what happens if the hood needs a larger repair or replacement. A cabinet designed tightly around one body can be legitimate, but the owner should understand what must be removed and reinstated to reach it. Keep that detail with the appliance records so it does not disappear after handover.

Put the hood model and installation requirements into the appliance schedule. [Kitchen renovation: what to decide before your cabinets are made](#) →

Price the route as well as the hood

- + Hood and accessories
- + Air route and cabinet changes
- + Electrical work and making good
- = Complete installed scope

Include the air route, cabinet changes and making good in the installed hood price.

Ask for the equipment, required accessories, duct or recirculation components, cabinet changes, electrical work and making good to be identified in the scope. A fitting-only price and a complete installed price are different offers. [Electrical point and wiring changes](#) belong with an appropriate Licensed Electrical Worker.

Where the route is uncertain, ask for the unresolved condition and the decision needed to price it. For example, the team may need to inspect the retained ceiling route before confirming the extent of opening and reinstatement. Keep that uncertainty visible in the comparison; it is more informative than

assigning a hopeful allowance and treating it as a fixed quotation.

The [landed kitchen buying guide](#) helps place the hood decision within the full layout and renovation scope. Bring your hob and hood shortlist, photographs of the kitchen and proposed cooking position to the project discussion. Before approving the upper cabinets, ask to see the air route complete from beginning to end.

More on kitchen renovation

[Article](#) [Planning Kitchen Cabinets? Choose Your Appliances First](#)

[Article](#) [Kitchen Worktops Compared: Choose for How You Cook](#)

Our service

Kitchen Renovation for your home

Explore the service, then discuss what your home needs with our team.

[View service details ↗](#)

Still weighing your options?

Plan with the buying guide

Bring the choices, costs and questions together before deciding what to do next.

[Read the kitchen renovation buying guide →](#)

[More kitchen renovation articles →](#)

Ready to discuss your home? [WhatsApp our team](#) or [request a quote](#).