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## Household 'elves' make popular gifts

SANTA MAY HAVE elves to help with his chores, but most homemakers have to rely on themselves — and whatever gadgets they can accumulate to make life around the house easier.

Following is a rundown of some of the appliances — big and small — that qualify as homemaker "elves" for this holiday season.

**Cordless appliances.** One major trend for this season is the cordless rechargeable appliance. These range from hand mixers and knives to flashlights and small vacuum cleaners.

**Convertible vacuums.** If you like the vacuum idea but prefer electric appliances, there are models available that can convert from a floor broom that sweeps wall-to-wall carpeting to a hand vacuum gentle enough to dust mini-blinds and draperies.

Another popular trend, is any appliance that makes cooking and baking easier. Here's a listing of some of the products:

**MICROWAVES.** Last year more than 8.5 million microwave ovens were sold in the United States, making it the country's fastest-selling home appliance. The trend is expected to continue, as new models

are produced to suit every cook's lifestyle. These models range in size and capability from compact ovens that are perfect for simple tasks like reheating leftovers and defrosting foods to full-size models that have built-in turntables and sensors that automatically detect when food is done.

Since everyday cookware often cannot be used in microwaves, special accessories also are growing market. And there is quite a variety from which to choose, including rotating dishes, popcorn poppers, browning utensils, bacon racks, steamers, and appliances that heat seal foods into microwave safe pouches.

**GARDEN TOOLS.** Since 38 percent of U.S. home owners are gardeners, a growing array of gardening equipment is available for practical gift-giving. There's an appropriate tool for every level of interest, from basic hand clippers and hoes to shredder-clippers that chop up organic matter to make a nutrient-rich compost.

**THE BIG ONES.** For practical gift-giving not limited by a tight budget, don't forget about refrigerators, dishwashers, washers and dryers.


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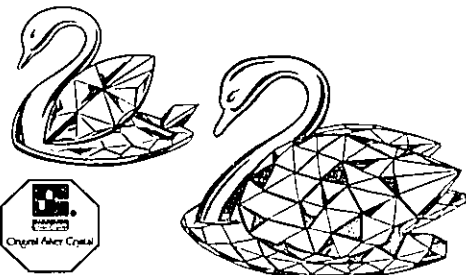
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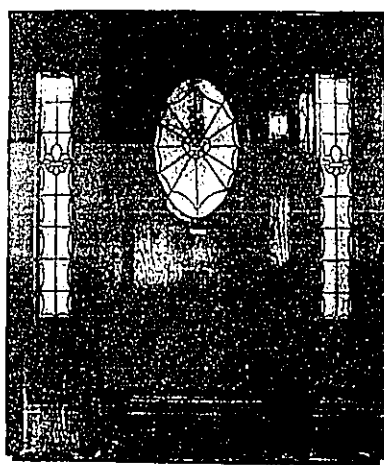
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