

Facts About Toasters and Toaster Ovens

Oregon State University Extension Service

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NEXT to the iron, there are more toasters in American homes than any other appliance. There are two types of toasters—the upright that holds slices of bread vertically, or the horizontal, in which slices lie flat.

Most of the toasters sold today are automatic pop-up types that hold two to four slices of bread vertically. Some four-slice type toasters have two controls to let you regulate amount of darkness between the two to four slices of bread. Toasters vary in depth and width of the bread well so various sizes of bread can be toasted.

To maintain long toaster life, do not put bread in the toaster that has already been spread with any substance like jam, butter, or honey. When these substances heat in the toaster, they melt and cover the heating coils. This damages the thermostatic coils; they become less heat sensitive and tend to overheat and burn bread slices. Trying to remove the buildup in cleaning could further damage the coils. Food should not be forced into the toaster wells. Also, don't put sharp objects such as knives in the well of the toaster.

Caring for your toaster

A clean toaster performs better and lasts longer. To clean, unplug the toaster, open the tray, and brush off the crumbs. Wipe the crumb tray with a damp cloth. If the tray has a stain or spot, use a nylon or plastic scouring brush, then rinse and dry the tray thoroughly before closing. You may wonder why you need bother with a spot *inside* the toaster. The reason is that most trays are designed to reflect heat helping toast the bread. They will have been treated with a special finish to do so. A harsh abrasive cleaner on a spot may damage this finish.

To clean the outside of your toaster, be sure it is cool then wipe with a damp cloth, dry and polish with a dry cloth. If you have a chrome toaster, use glass or window cleaner to take off finger prints. To keep a chrome toaster shiny, occasionally polish it with a silver polish.

Deciding what toaster model to buy

If you are buying a toaster for yourself or as a gift, look for these features:

- *Check* to be sure toaster wells are large enough to accommodate many of the new foods that can now be toasted; thick slices of bread, frozen waffles, English muffins.

- *Decide* where you will be using the toaster. If you can't easily get at the appliance, you may not use it, and the toaster, like many other appliances, may end up permanently stored.

- *Note*, is the color control flexible so that everyone in the family will be satisfied? Is it easily seen and adjustable? Watch for toasters that have controls located where you can be burned if you try to adjust it while hot—avoid these models. Some toasters have a reheat setting and others allow you to toast light and dark at the same time. Carefully consider what you prefer when deciding on the toaster to buy.

- *Look* to see how high the bread is lifted after it is finished toasting. Pieces of bread or muffin can become stuck if they do not pop up high enough above the toaster top for you to retrieve them.

- *Open* the crumb tray so see if it can be easily cleaned and that there are no sharp edges to cut you. Check to see that it replaces easily.

- *Read* the wattage rating printed on the hang tag and/or name plate of the appliance. Most two-slice toasters are rated from 750 up to 1350 watts; most four-slice toasters and toaster ovens are rated between 1350 and 1650 watts. The higher it is, the faster the toasting and the softer the inner layers of bread will be.

- *Look* for the UL label for Underwriters Laboratories, Inc. This certifies that the toaster has been checked for electric safety.

- *Read* your guarantee. *Before* buying, make sure you know where service is available, should it need repairs.

- *Consider* the cost. Conventional uprights cost from \$8 to \$20 for two-slice models, and less than \$20 to over \$40 for the four-slice capacity. Horizontal toasters and uprights with ovens are in the same price range as four-slice conventional models.

Toaster ovens

What are the differences between toaster ovens and the horizontal toaster or broiler grill? Though they may look alike, one difference is the heating element. Toasters have a wire rack supporting the bread; toasting is done on both sides at once. Directions will caution you not to cook meats on the toaster racks. Broiler grills, however, have a top heating element that will cook meats.

A toaster oven will toast many foods of several sizes and shapes. You can bake snacks, appetizers, frozen dinners, small casseroles, a small batch of cookies or rolls, and many other things that could be baked in a small portable oven. You cannot broil food in a toaster oven.

Using your toaster oven

Always read the instructions before operating any appliance. The use and care manual will give directions for various uses and often gives unique recipes, as well.

The toaster oven will toast, bake, and top brown.

Usually, you can use the same times and temperatures called for in regular oven recipes. However, some toaster ovens are either faster or slower than your regular oven, and you will have to keep a close watch at first.

A common mistake is to cover the rack with foil. Though this may make cleanup easy, it keeps heat from circulating and should not be done.

If instructions call for a baking sheet, you can use the oven tray that comes with the appliance.

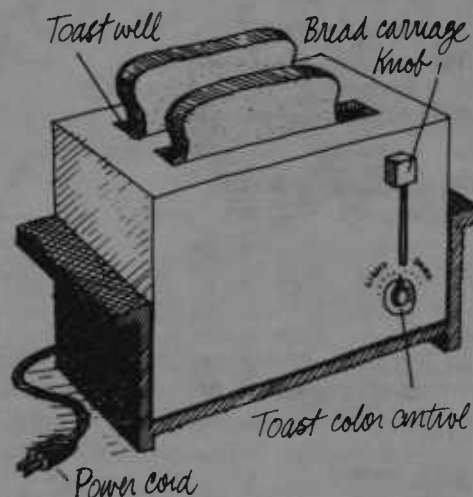
Caring for your toaster oven

For the oven to work well and last a long time, *keep it clean!* If spattered grease is allowed to build, you run the risk of a fire. An accumulation of grease will affect how well your oven performs for toasting and baking.

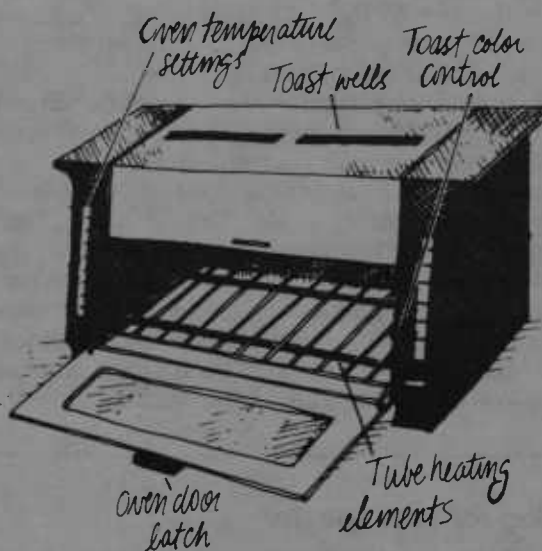
To avoid electric shock, unplug before you clean. Racks and inside walls can be wiped with soapy water and rinsed. Be careful not to drop water on electric wires. Especially clean the temperature sensor; grease or food build-up coats the sensor and thermostatic control will not be accurate.

Buying a new toaster oven

There are two main types of toaster ovens. One toasts and bakes. To bake, the oven tray is left in the compartment; to toast, the tray is taken out and foods toast on the wire rack. The other model has toaster compartments on the



Conventional upright toaster



Combination upright toaster

top like a pop-up toaster. An oven baking unit is below its toaster. Either section can be used but not at the same time.

When shopping for a toaster oven, look for:

- **Size**, both in height and width. This is important because size determines capacity and versatility. Will it accommodate a casserole dish? Will frozen dinners fit? Will only bread fit?
- **Controls** that are easy to use. Some ovens have the same control for both baking and toasting.
- **Removable racks and trays** to make cleaning easier.
- **The UL symbol**—it assures electrical safety.

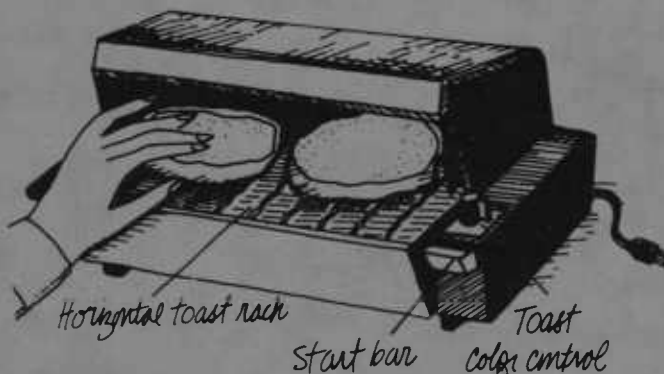
Tips for toaster foods

- Many things affect the toasting of bread; shape of loaf or bread, moisture content, amount of fat, amount of sugar, and type of flour. For this reason, you may need to adjust the color setting accordingly. For example, dry bread toasts fast, as do raisin and sweet breads.

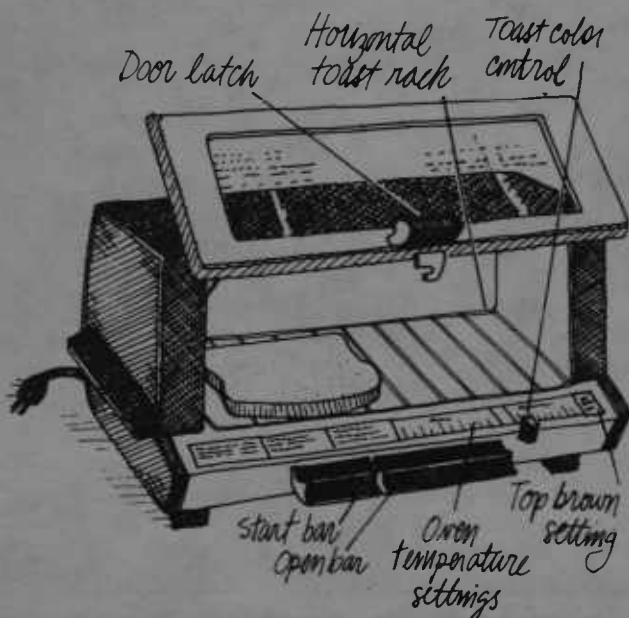
- If you want a crustless bread, first toast, then remove the crust or cut into half slices.

- Toaster pastries are hot after toasting. They absorb heat quickly because of their sugar content. Remove using a mitt or tongs, being careful not to touch tongs on the inside of the toaster.

- To avoid a soggy product after toasting, do not place the hot product on a cold surface. Put toasted food on a cloth, a small rack, or on paper. Air circulation around the food will reduce condensation.



Reflector toaster



Horizontal toaster oven

- Convenience foods, such as tarts, waffles, and French toast, are heavier than bread. Make sure your toaster will pop-up when they are toasted.

Safe toaster use

- Never plunge the toaster or oven in water, or you may receive a severe or fatal shock.

- Overly large food, a metal foil package, or a utensil may create a fire or electrical hazard. Never put them in a toaster.

- If you have broken or curled toast, unplug the toaster and turn it upside down. Shake very gently to avoid damage to the wiring and heat sensor.

- Keep the toaster away from any flammable material when in use, such as drapes or walls, and especially bread wrappers. A melted plastic package is almost impossible to get off the toaster once cooled, plus the unpleasant odor may linger for some time. To protect the wall cover, allow about a one-inch space from the wall when toasting.

- The toaster and toaster oven have high wattages—from 750 watts to 1650 watts. Toasters rated at 1440 watts or below can be used on most kitchen electrical circuits without overloading wiring if other high-wattage appliances, such as electric irons, coffee makers or electric skillets, are not operated at the same time. A toaster rated above 1440 watts should always be operated on an electrical circuit by itself; no other appliance should be used on its circuit at the same time.

A toasting appliance can make breakfast quicker and more satisfying. With proper selection, you will have an efficient kitchen helper for years.

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