



Byrd's Kitchen

by Vivian Byrd

Convection oven latest cooking gadget

Given, of course, equipment that is in good working order, a better-than-average cook will turn out the same quality dishes regardless of the brand or type of appliances she or he uses.

You probably recall the advent of food processors four or five years ago. Dandy machines for preparing large quantities (but how often do you make a banquet?), they were marketed as a revolution in the kitchen.

However, when a recipe requires a small quantity of an ingredient, it seems to take longer to get out the processor, set it up with the right blade and prepare the ingredient than to slice, grate, etc. by hand.

With this in mind, I went somewhat skeptically to a recent demonstration of the latest kitchen toy, the countertop convection oven.

CONVECTION OVENS are being touted as a new method of cooking, 25-30 percent faster, and, therefore, energy efficient. Another kitchen revolution.

As of this fall, there are six models available, ranging from 16 to 22 pounds, requiring from 16 to 20 inches of counter space (a lot of precious space in most kitchens).

A fan circulates heat inside the oven, cooking food evenly on all exposed sides, supposedly faster than conventional ovens. More than one food can be cooked in the oven at once without mingling of flavors.

Some models are self-cleaning, some offer optional dehydrating racks, removable drip-pans, buzzer signals at the end of cooking time and other features.

They sell in the \$190-\$275 price range.

One manufacturer has put together a unit, obviously not countertop, which combines a microwave upper oven, gas burners and convection lower oven. It sells for around \$1,100.

ANOTHER MANUFACTURER offers a built-in model, to replace your current oven, or main oven if you have

two. It sells for approximately \$600.

In demonstration, a chicken leg quarter (with attached thigh) cooked in 35 minutes to a nice golden brown. Not a great time savings over a conventional oven.

There are maximum sizes the oven can accommodate. For instance, if your Christmas turkey weighs more than 10 pounds for some models, 14 pounds for others, it will be too large for these small to medium size ovens.

Consumer Reports (November 1979) details results of their testing of three models, none of which measured up to the manufacturer's claims.

Cakes did poorly in these ovens. Cooking time was not appreciably less than CR's top-rated range oven. The units did not clean up as easily as claimed.

A GOOD DEAL of heat was generated in the kitchen, and while it is true

that a standard outlet could be used, nothing else could be plugged into the same outlet during use without blowing a fuse.

Some models require an additional investment for all new pans designed to fit those models. On one model replacement of breakable glass parts can cost up to \$89. One manufacturer said its service centers are not yet operating and units are replaced when problems develop. Service is expected to be available sometime next year.

A convection oven is definitely a luxury item, and to my eye, seems more a sophisticated model of a toaster oven than a revolution in cooking.

Questions, comments or recipes you would like to share should be addressed to Vivian Byrd, The Eccentric Newspapers, 1225 Bowers, Birmingham, MI 48012. Please include name, address and phone number.

Monday, December 10, 1979

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Holiday Eggs

1 pkg (6-serving size) stuffing mix, any flavor
1/4 cup butter or margarine, cut into pieces
1 1/2 cups hot water
1 cup shredded cooked ham
6 eggs

Place contents of vegetable/seasoning packet (from stuffing mix) and butter in a shallow two-quart baking dish. Add water. Stir just to blend and completely melt butter. Add stuffing crumbs; stir just to moisten. Spread mixture evenly in dish and mark into six squares. Sprinkle with ham. Make a depression in center of each square; and carefully add eggs. Bake at 425 degrees about 10 minutes, or until eggs are set. Serve with a sauce if desired.

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