

There's a lot to consider when deciding whether to repair or replace appliance

I received an e-mail the other day from Ms. Lalonde, who tells me she has a Kelvinator oven that no longer works. The burners on top are all functioning but the oven elements fail to come on.

This oven, she says, is a late 1940s model and she would like to have it repaired so she can keep the 1950s look in her kitchen. Her biggest fear is not finding someone to fix this beautiful creature of a kitchen range who knows what they're doing.

I say to you, my dear, you deserve better than what you have endured all these years. You are more than deserving of a new state-of-the-art, modern day range that has self-cleaning features that don't really clean the interior like they should.

Why should you keep a stove that has nice, cool exterior parts when you could have one that gets so hot on the outside it will burn your grandchildren's fingers?

Those nice, thick burners on top should be replaced with little, skinny ones that are known to explode just when you put your hand on the handle of the



Appliance doctor
Joe Gagnon

fraying pan. Why would you want burners on a stove to last 50 years plus?

Ms. Lalonde, if I could rewire the stove you have I would give it to you for free, just for taking such good care of the one you have.

I must first of all apologize for being facetious with my comments, but I am not one who believes that major appliances are made as well as they once were.

There is again another problem besides the one of finding someone competent to repair it, and that is the question of the condition of the wires within your range.

I have seen electrical wires that run throughout the inside of a stove such as yours be so brittle that they almost break apart with only a slight touch. This would mean the complete

rewiring of your range, which would cost so much it isn't feasible to do.

Let's say you decided to go ahead and get it done anyway. What would you do if a few weeks later the oven thermostat went bad and I doubt if you could find one anywhere in the country? All the money you already spent is gone to waste.

I have heard many opinions that inform consumers on when a person should choose to replace instead of fix an appliance. The true rule should be based on the knowledge that a homeowner has of that particular appliance. The age, the usage factor — whether it was hardly used or how frequently it was used — and more make up the decision of a consumer.

Now, with all that said, I would like to give you my personal viewpoint on the kitchen range.

The stoves of today coming into this country from overseas are something to look at. The quality and structure of these products is apparent by simply opening and closing a door. Run your knuckle on the side panel and you can judge the thickness of the metal used. Talk about quality, they've got it; and they also have the price to match it.

The bigger question remains: When will we get this kind of product from our own appliance manufacturers? I wish you good shopping, and please do so wisely. Stay tuned.

Joe Gagnon can now be heard on WHL-950 and WHY-1270. He is a member and past president of the Society of Consumer Affairs Professionals. His phone number is (248) 455-7281.

Refuse to write off summer season yet



Celebrating family
Lisa Healy

In a short period of time, your child will be back in school. That is no reason to write off the rest of the summer break.

You can't ignore your calendar. It is August. In a short period of time, your child will be back in school. That is no reason to write off the rest of the summer break.

Try to ignore all the early bird back-to-school advertising you see on television, in your newspaper and on store displays for a while. Alter your mindset by looking at the days between now and the school bell as tremendous opportunities to try activities your family hasn't experienced yet this season.

Consider these helpful thought starters:

■ Buy a new game and actually read the rules before you play.

■ Challenge your child to paint a self-portrait or landscape of a favorite location.

■ Pack up a meal and go on a picnic.

■ Count the stars.

■ Start a new conversation by asking each other questions.

■ What famous person would you like to change places with for a day? "What would you do if you won the lottery?" "Whom do you most admire?"

■ Collect beach glass.

■ Preserve a summer memory. Put sand from your favorite beach in a jar you can look at all year long. Make a shadow box of your favorite things.

■ Shop end-of-the-season bargains. Experience a sidewalk sale.

■ Go to an ice cream parlor in a local downtown area, eat outside and watch the world go by.

■ Share a slice of your childhood, such as an old family tradition or your favorite ice cream sundae your mother used to make, with your child.

■ Ask someone to take your family's holiday card photograph.

■ Clean things your family has been putting off (i.e. bicycles, toys and the garage).

■ Laugh at the movies.

■ Get lost in books at the library.

■ Take a mystery trip. Plan something your child isn't expecting and surprise him or her.

■ Wash your family vehicle, inside and out.

■ Make homemade popsicles.

■ Visit relatives and friends you've been wanting to see.

■ Go to a concert in the park.

■ Plan your family's back-to-school routine — together.

■ Shop with your child for fun back-to-school things.

■ Journal together. Mark the most memorable moments of your family's summer vacation.

■ Take a boat ride.

■ Trade each other something new — something you know how to do that your child doesn't, or vice versa. For instance, teach your child how to play golf and ask him to show you how to burn a CD on the computer.

■ Write a song or a meaningful poem.

■ Plan a potluck dinner with other families.

■ Take a bike ride and occasionally stop to notice something new about the surroundings.

■ Start a new exercise routine together. Make it something you haven't done together before, whether it's morning stretching, brisk walking or tennis.

■ Above all, enjoy August. It's still summertime. Make your own list of things to do together. Get out there and do them. September is as far off as you choose to make it.

To leave Lisa Luckow-Healy a message from a touch-tone phone about how you celebrate family, call (734) 953-2047.

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