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GANNETT NEWS SERVICE

Convection affection

Tips help home cooks cozy up to trendy appliance

By KAREN FERNAU
Gannett News Service

Convection ovens continue to attract — and confuse — cooks. Do they work only for baking?

Why does cooking faster matter?

According to Amy Ahrensdorf, chef for SunWest Appliance Distributing in Tempe, Ariz., convection ovens are all-purpose kitchen workhorses, turning out evenly cooked cookies; juicy, well-browned poultry and meats; and vegetables

packed with caramelized flavor.

Whether gas or electric, the ovens work their magic with a fan that circulates hot air around food. This moving blast of air speeds up the heat transference that occurs when two temperatures converge.

Think wind chill, Ahrensdorf says. When cold air blows, you feel colder more quickly than on a windless day.

"People just need to take a little time to learn about convection ovens before they buy or use one in their own kitchens," she says. Here are her tips:

■ Not all convection ovens are "true convection." The true, or best, ovens blow heated air into the oven cav-

ity. This means they have a third heating element near the fan in the back of the oven, in addition to the usual top and bottom elements.

■ Food cooked in a convection oven usually is done about 25 percent faster, so foods retain more nutrients and lose less moisture.

■ In a conventional oven, baking three racks of cookies is an invitation for trouble. Chances are the bottom row will burn and the top will be undercooked. Not so in a convection oven. The circulating air makes baking cookies easier, because it eliminates hot and cool spots and differences in cooking times.

■ To reap the benefits of the circulating air, you must

use the appropriate pan. The whole point of convection is to have air circulating around the food, so casserole lids and high-sided cooking pans do not work. Use the conventional oven when cooking with these pans. Convections work best with cookie sheets and shallow pans. When cooking beef, pork or poultry, place them on a rack to allow air to circulate beneath.

■ Bake pizza, tartlet shells and breads.

■ Do not bake delicate desserts, such as ladyfingers, souffles or meringues on the convection setting.

■ Several dishes can be cooked at the same time without flavors transferring from one dish to another.

How long should it last?

The Washington Post

Life spans of some common home parts, according to the National Association of Home Builders. These estimates assume regular maintenance. (List is by life in years; "lifetime" is defined as 60 to 100 years.)

Concrete and masonry

Brick, 100+
Veneer, lifetime
Caulking (for sealer), 2 - 20

Countertops

Cultured marble, 20
Natural stone, lifetime
Tile, lifetime
Wood, lifetime

Engineered lumber

Engineered trim, 30
Laminated strand lumber, lifetime
Laminated veneer lumber, 30+
Floor trusses, lifetime
Roof trusses, lifetime

Sinks

Enamel steel, 5 - 10
Modified acrylic, 50
Soapstone, 100+

Flooring

All wooden floors, lifetime
Bamboo, lifetime
Brick pavers, 100+
Carpet, 8 - 10
Concrete, 50+
Engineered wood, 50+
Granite, 100+
Laminate, 15 - 25
Linoleum, 25
Marble, 100+
Slate, 100
Tile, lifetime
Vinyl, 50
Terrazzo, 75+

Garages

Garage door openers, 10 1/2 - 15
Light inserts, 20

Heating and cooling

Air conditioners, 10 - 15
Air quality systems, 15
Boilers, 13 - 21
Dehumidifiers, 8
Ducting, 10
Furnaces, 15 - 20
Heat pumps, 16
Heat recovery ventilators, 20+
Thermostats, 35
Ventilators, 7
Water heaters, tankless 20+
Electric radiant heater, 40
Hot water or steam radiant heater, 15+
Diffusers, grilles and registers, 25
Induction and fan-coil units, 10 - 15
Dampers, 20+
Burners, under 10

Paints

Exterior, 15+
Interior, 15+

Roofing

Aluminum roof coating, 3 1/2 - 7
Fiber cement, 25
Asphalt, 20
Modified bitumen, 20
Wood, 30
Clay/concrete, lifetime
Slate, 50+
Coal and tar, 30

Siding and accessories

Brick, Lifetime
Engineered wood, lifetime
Fiber cement, lifetime
Manufactured stone, lifetime
Stone, lifetime
Stucco, 50 - 100
Vinyl, lifetime

Cabinetry and storage

Bath cabinets, lifetime
Entertainment centers/home office, 10
Garage/laundry cabinets, 100+
Kitchen cabinets, 50
Medicine cabinets, 20+
Closet systems/closet shelves, lifetime

ABOUT THIS SECTION

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