

Saving Energy in the Kitchen

Across America, home refrigerators use the electricity of 25 large power plants every year.

COOKING AND CLEANING -

- Use pots and pans with absolutely flat bottoms on your range. To cook efficiently, heat must transfer directly from the surface element to the pan. Warped bottoms leave an air gap which provides an escape route for heat.
- Select pots and pans that are the right size to completely cover the surface element. When any part of the surface element is exposed, you're wasting heat and energy.
- Keep reflector pans beneath surface elements shiny and clean. Shiny pans reflect heat rays onto pan bottoms. Dull pans absorb the heat.
- Develop the habit of "lids on" cooking. Tight-fitting lids help keep heat in a pan, permitting you to use lower temperature settings and shorter cooking times.
- Heat only the amount of water you need for cooking. The water will boil faster if you cover it with a lid.
- Start vegetables on high heat in a covered pan. When steam appears around the lid, lower the heat setting and allow food to simmer until done.
- Plan one-dish meals in a slow cooker. Such meals require less energy than those calling for the use of the oven plus two or three surface elements.
- Make more use of your pressure cooker. It cuts cooking time to one-third that of conventional methods.
- Consider cooking small quantities of food in appliances such as an electric toaster oven, skillet or grill instead of your oven. Portable appliances generally use about one third the electricity of your oven. Also, consider using smaller coffee makers if you only want one or two cups of coffee.
- Use your microwave oven instead of your conventional electric oven whenever possible. Microwaves can cook food in one-fourth or less the normal cooking time.
- Prepare your whole meal in the oven at the same time. Often you can simultaneously cook foods that have different cooking temperatures. Variations of 25 degrees usually produce favorable cooking results.
- Carefully time your preheat period when baking. Generally, five to eight minutes is sufficient. There is no need to preheat for broiling, roasting or cooking most casseroles.

- Rearrange oven shelves before turning on the oven to prevent wasteful heat escape.
- Avoid opening the oven door for a “peek” when baking. Each time you open the door, a considerable portion of the heat escapes.
- Use the outside barbecue grill whenever possible. This will keep the heat out of the kitchen. Barbecuing can also be a fun time for the whole family.
- Gas flames from your stove should burn with a clear blue color. A yellow flame may indicate that your burner isn’t operating efficiently.
- Fill a dishpan with rinse water instead of letting the faucet run while you do dishes by hand.
- Use cold water when operating your garbage disposal. It saves energy and solidifies the grease, which is then ground up and flushed away.
- Activate the self-cleaning cycle on your electric oven only when the oven is heavily soiled. Start the cycle right after using the oven while it is still hot.
- Be sure to place the faucet lever on the kitchen sink in the cold position when using small amounts of water; placing the lever in the hot position uses energy to heat the water even though it may never reach the faucet.
- Cooking water and fish tank water are both excellent for watering plants.

COOKING AND CLEANING -

- Use energy-saving cycles. Apply the no-heat, air-dry feature. If your dishwasher does not have this feature, turn it off after the final rinse cycle and open the door so that the dishes can air dry.
- Wash full loads only.
- Proper amounts of detergent can eliminate a second wash. Fill your dishwasher according to the manufacturer’s instructions so that proper water flow cleans dishes thoroughly.
- Always choose the shortest washing cycle that will clean your dishes and scrape off heavy food accumulated before loading dishes into the dishwasher.
- Use your dishwasher’s “power-saver switch” if it has one to automatically eliminate the drying cycle.
 - On hot days, wait to use your dishwasher until night. You will avoid adding heat in the house during the hottest time of the day.
 - Set your dishwasher to “air-dry”.

REFRIGERATORS AND FREEZERS -

- Keep your refrigerator and freezer at the right temperature. The refrigerator should be between 38° F and 42° F and the freezer between 0° F and 5° F.
- Vacuum condenser coils in the back or at the bottom of your refrigerator every three months or so. Dust-covered coils impair the efficiency of compressor operation and increase energy use.
- Discard old or extra refrigerators.
- Don't open the refrigerator longer or more often than necessary. Decide what you want before you open the door.
- Let hot items cool before placing them in the refrigerator.
- Defrost the freezer regularly.
- Make sure refrigerators and freezers have tight-fitting door gaskets to prevent infiltration to warm air.
- Keep refrigerators and freezers filled to capacity but don't overcrowd to the point where air cannot circulate freely around food.
- Empty or nearly empty refrigerators do not operate efficiently. Use water containers or bags of ice cubes to fill empty space.
- Turn down your refrigerator and remove perishables before going on an extended vacation.
- Refrigerators and freezers in the garage or outside can be a real energy hog. High temperatures make your refrigerator or freezer use much more energy, which adds to your electricity bills. Consider disconnecting them at least for the summer or moving them to an air-conditioned area.