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From Blenders to Hair Dryers

by Sharon Sherman, C. D. 2

Toaster, portable mixer, coffeemaker, waffle iron, blender, rotisserie — this sounds like a bride-to-be doing a little wishful thinking. Actually, they are part of the list of appliances studied in Household Equipment 208, Small Equipment.

In addition to the items listed above, the course deals with small motor-driven appliances such as floor scrubbers, waxes, and vacuum cleaners. Though this may seem like a lot to cover in a class which meets six hours each week for four credits, the scope does not end here. Among other tools investigated are saucepans, frypans, electric blankets, hair dryers, and sewing machines.

The basic objective of this course is to learn to use small equipment efficiently and safely and to become a better judge of equipment from the standpoint of construction and performance.

A typical day in the lab might include a demonstration of a hair dryer by one of the girls and a class discussion comparing the brand demonstrated with other familiar brands. Advantages and disadvantages are pointed out, and special features are noted and analyzed to see if they are worth the added cost to the homemaker.

Demonstrations of this type, however, are a sidelight to regular class procedure, which centers around actual experience with the items being studied. For example, at the beginning of class the students may be given a check-list for evaluating an appliance. On a day when deep-fat fryers are to be checked, this list would include electrical specifications, construction, safety devices, convenience, efficiency, performance, and the ease of cleaning. With these characteristics in mind, the girls put the appliances through practical tests. Making doughnuts, onion rings, and potato chips might be some good tests on the deep-fat fryer. Class discussion following this helps girls share their experiences with the entire class.

Shopping tours, preparation of a meal using small equipment only, and other lab experiences give students a chance to apply some of the principles they learn.

Because the basis of this course is practical, it attracts girls from various fields. It is useful when you come to setting up your own household. It can be used when you are called upon to explain the equipment in teaching. It helps you to become more discriminating in your purchase of any item. If you have an elective and don’t know how to fill it, it might be that H.Eq. 208 would fit into your schedule.