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You Need Another Oven

By Ethyl Cessna Morgan

IT costs one-half as much to bake enough potatoes for a family of four in a small oven on top of the gas stove as it does to bake them in the large oven, which is a part of the range.

This does not mean that the stationary oven is not efficient for many purposes. It is so well insulated and so well equipped that the guess work has been practically taken out of gas stove cookery.

But conveniences are always costly. Every homemaker who tries to economize on her gas bill hesitates to light the big oven unless she can fill it. She forgoes the hot bread for supper or the delicately browned meringue to finish off the pudding because the balance of the meal may be done on top of the stove, and she feels it is too costly to light the large oven unless she uses it to its maximum capacity.

The small portable oven which may be used on one of the top burners is a real blessing to the thrifty homemaker.

Recent experiments by the writer in the Household Equipment laboratories at Iowa State College, show that there is a material saving in both time and fuel in such a task as the baking of a small quantity of potatoes alone, or in baking a pan of biscuits for supper.

The greatest objection to the portable oven is the difficulty in learning to use it successfully. The real trouble is not so much with the oven as with us. We are so accustomed to the large oven that we fail to realize that the small oven is different.

Our complaint is that things burn on the bottom before they are done on top. This is due to the differences in oven temperatures.

The large, well insulated oven with which our modern gas range is equipped is of practically uniform temperature in all parts of the oven, while the temperature in the portable oven may vary fifty degrees between the top and the bottom of the oven. That is, when the thermometer on the bottom shelf



registers 500, the thermometer on the top shelf registers 450.

It is perfectly possible to bake just as good biscuits in the small oven as in the large one if we remember the differences in the ovens and act accordingly.

Where only one pan of biscuits is to be baked at a time, it is most satisfactory to bake it on an inverted pan placed on the bottom shelf. This brings the biscuits to about the center of the oven. If two pans full are to be baked, they should be interchanged during the baking process. If a six inch burner is being used, it is advisable to turn down the burner after preheating the oven.

Probably the most satisfactory biscuits are those baked on a four inch burner. They do not bake as quickly but the slightly longer time required is justified by the quality of the product.

This same general procedure may be used in baking potatoes or in other baking.

Each oven has its own peculiarities and limitations so we must experiment with our own oven in the light of these suggestions. Just as desirable products and much smaller gas bills will be our reward.

It costs approximately one and a half cents to bake a pan of biscuits

in a single portable oven on a six inch burner; two and a half cents in a double portable, and four cents in the regular stove oven at an average gas rate.

Similarly, it costs four and a half cents to bake potatoes for a family of four in a single portable oven on a six inch burner, seven cents in a double portable, and ten cents in a stationary oven.

These savings seem trifling when thought of in terms of just one baking process, but when translated into terms of a year's baking they are much more apparent.

If a family were to have hot bread once a day for a year, and use the oven for that alone, it would cost approximately \$6 in the single oven; \$9 in the double oven

and \$15 in the large stove oven. Or, if the family had baked potatoes every day for a year and used the oven for this alone, it would cost more than \$16 to bake them in the single oven; \$27 in the double oven and more than \$36 in the stationary oven.

Of course, no one is going to use her oven quite this way. Practically every time, the oven will be used for several things at once. But these hypothetical figures do not show that there is a real saving in fuel cost by the use of the portable oven. A good single portable oven of first class construction may be purchased for \$7 to \$7.50. Its purchase price may be saved several times each year by using it for small bakings.

The use of the double portable oven is not so advisable. Usually if the housewife does enough baking to use a double portable oven, she is probably doing enough baking to justify the use of her regular stove oven.

Much fuel economy too may be affected by using the range oven, when lighted, to its full capacity, having an oven dinner, or baking something for a day ahead, of course this does not always fit in with her other plans.

She will find the single portable oven a very excellent supplement to her regular range oven.