



Warming Drawer Aids Kitchen Efficiency

Q With our busy schedules, it is difficult to get our family together.

Does it make good energy sense to cook a large meal in the oven and then use a warming drawer?

A Family dining patterns are different today. With busier

schedules, it can be hard to prepare food in an energy-efficient manner.

The most efficient method is a single meal, which is large enough for the entire family, cooked in the oven. It takes about as much energy to bake one potato as it does to bake six, so it is generally more efficient to make as much as possible at one time. The same is true of frozen prepared dishes.

The heating element in an electric oven can easily use more than 2,000 watts.

A microwave oven can cook smaller quantities of food using less energy than a conventional oven, but some of the large models use almost 1,300 watts of electricity. A microwave oven does not develop enough residual heat to keep foods safely warm if not consumed immediately. Any extras saved for a late dinner have to be refrigerated and later reheated, consuming even more energy.

Using a warming drawer is an efficient alterna-



This 450-watt warming drawer is sized to fit perfectly in standard under-counter cabinets. Photo courtesy of General Electric.

tive to using a microwave oven when your family eats dinner at different times. Warming drawers use between 450 and 600 watts of electricity to keep entire dinners warm.

The heating elements are thermostatically controlled, so they are on only part of the time. Most foods must be kept above about 140 degrees to ensure they do not spoil. Warming drawers plug into any standard 120-volt electric outlet.

Warming drawers are typically sold in widths of 27 and 30 inches, but 24- and 36-inch wide models are also available. The widths are selected to match standard widths of kitchen cabinets and other appliances.

When closed, a warming drawer looks similar to another drawer under the countertop. The controls are hidden behind the front cover, so it must be

opened to access them.

A warming drawer also can be mounted under the oven. This is a convenient way to transfer food. Transferring the food quickly cools it down less, so the drawer uses less electricity to keep it warm.

A warming drawer is not designed to initially reheat or cook food. Always use a standard appliance to thoroughly cook food first.

The better models have built-in moisture controls. Most foods taste "just cooked" when kept warm at the moist setting. Other foods, such as baked potatoes and fried foods, are often better stored at the crisp setting.

Food holding tempera-

ture settings typically range from 100 to 210 degrees, with four set points. Some models can be set as low as 70 degrees and as high as 250 degrees. A lower temperature setting consumes less electricity. If you bake yeast dough, select a warming drawer with a low 90-degree moist setting to proof the dough.

For food safety, always preheat the drawer before placing food in it. If it is not preheated, the food temperature may drop below a safe temperature for too long. Most models preheat to 160 degrees in 20 to 40 minutes.

When cooking meals, use the smallest appliance possible to save energy.

The following offer warming drawers:

- Dacor, (800) 793-0093, www.dacor.com
- General Electric, (800) 626-2000, www.geappliances.com
- Jenn-Air, (800) 688-1100, www.jennair.com
- Miele, (800) 843-7231, www.mieleusa.com
- Thermador, (800) 656-9226, www.thermador.com. ■



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