

## **Beyond Salad: How to Save Energy in the Kitchen During the Summer**

Energy Savers Blog

One day I ordered pizza delivery. Another day, I went out to eat (well, several days actually). Yet another day found me trolling the produce and canned veggie & fruit aisles of the supermarket to assemble an interesting salad. But sooner or later, I want to cook food: real food, in my home, made from scratch, using natural ingredients the way I prefer.

Even when it's blistering hot outside, sometimes I still crave a good hot meal. But what's a home cook to do when you finally get tired of grilling but loathe the idea of turning on the oven? Well, there are some simple, practical things you can do to reduce the energy load in your kitchen—as well as some tips that will help make the entire home more comfortable so you don't have to run screaming to the nearest air-conditioned restaurant.

Oven tips:

- **Limit pre-heating.** Pre-heating the oven is absolutely necessary if you're baking bread, cake or any foods that require rising (otherwise they won't rise properly). My oven has a display that counts down the pre-heating time and it's only 6 minutes. However, if I followed the instructions of the average baking recipe, they'd have me turn on the oven 30 minutes or more before I need it—that's far more time with a hot oven than I want to spend. If your oven doesn't have this display, use an oven thermometer so you can see when it's ready for baking action.  
If you're cooking lasagna or something similar, you don't really have to wait until the oven is completely pre-heated, but keep in mind that if it's not at the right temperature it may extend your cooking time and make up for whatever time you would save by not pre-heating.
- **Keep that door closed.** Every time you open the oven door, the oven temperature can drop 25 degrees. Avoid wasting energy by using the oven light or a timer. I use a digital timer which is more precise than a wind-up model.
- **Use a meat thermometer.** Want to roast something? Invest in a meat thermometer: these are oven-proof, and usually include a digital meter that tells you what temperature your chosen protein should be when it's done. This will reduce the need to open the oven door while cooking.
- **Clean the door seal.** Use a kitchen degreaser and gently clean the seal on your oven door so that it retains the maximum amount of heat.

Refrigerator tips:

- **Cover your food.** Your refrigerator's compressor works harder to cool moist air, and covered foods limit moisture evaporation. Of course, your refrigerator will smell better too.
- **Clean the coils.** Make it an annual thing: clean or dust the coils on the back of your refrigerator. This helps the compressor cool faster and run less frequently, reducing energy use and extending the life of the unit.

More tips:

- **Use other appliances.** Beyond microwaves, don't forget about toaster or convection ovens, slow cookers, and pressure cookers. These handy appliances use less energy and generate less heat than a standard oven.
- **Use fans.** A [ceiling fan](#) [1] in the kitchen or adjoining dining area will circulate the air and keep you more comfortable. Better yet, you can install a [whole-house fan](#) [2] or attic fan to keep the hot air moving up and out of your home.
- **Use energy-efficient lighting.** Replace your incandescent bulbs, [recessed downlights and undercabinet lighting](#) [3] with [CFL](#) [4] or [LED](#) [5] lighting in your kitchen (not to mention the rest of your home). These energy-efficient lights use far less energy and generate less heat: [incandescents](#) [6] release 90% of their energy as heat, while CFLs release less than this and LEDs release almost no heat.

Whew—I'm feeling cooler already. Happy cooking!

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