



Cooking Up Energy Savings in the Kitchen

By Tom Lienhard, PE, BSME, CEM, CLEP

Have you ever noticed that company always seems to congregate in the kitchen? Large or small, the kitchen is where we feel most at home. With family budgets tightening, the kitchen is busier now more than ever before - folks are bringing home the bacon and cooking it there too.

So, how do you stretch your energy dollar in the busiest room of your home? By choosing ENERGY STAR® qualified appliances and employing some no-cost tips to save energy. Energy Star appliances use up to 50 percent less energy to operate than standard models. Over the life of an Energy Star appliance, the money you save on energy could potentially cover the cost of the new appliance.

Lighting can account for up to 25 percent of your electric bill, and kitchen light fixtures are some of the most used lighting in the home. If you haven't already done so, replace your standard light bulbs with CFLs (compact fluorescent light bulbs). They generate less heat, last seven times longer and can use up to 75 percent less energy than incandescent light bulbs. CFLs now come in a variety of popular shapes and types like dimmable, three-way and electronic control for recessed can and cabinet mounted models.

Surprisingly, the biggest energy user in your home after heat/air conditioning and hot water is the refrigerator. Depending on its size and age, your refrigerator can cost you over \$200 per year on your energy bill. For maximum efficiency, set your refrigerator temperature between 35 and 38 degrees and position it away from a heat source like a stove. Vacuuming the coils can improve your refrigerator's efficiency by 3 to 6 percent, a savings of \$6 to \$14 a year.

Also, check your refrigerator door seals to ensure they are airtight and replace them if they are not. If your refrigerator was built before 1994, consider replacing it with an Energy Star model, which could use half of the energy of the old unit. Some electric utilities offer a recycling program that will pick up your pre-1994 refrigerator or freezer, pay you a small amount for it, then properly dispose and recycle the majority of the unit.

For more energy savings in the kitchen, run only a full dishwasher and use your dishwasher's automatic energy savings cool dry cycle. If your dishwasher doesn't have this feature, turn it off after the final rise and let the dishes air dry. Doing this can reduce dishwasher energy by 40 percent.



Keeping your range hood filters clean and removing any built up food particles can also save energy in the kitchen. Grease build-up can increase ventilation energy costs. Use your fan sparingly and only when cooking so you don't lose the conditioned air out the vent.

Every little bit really does add up - using the right size pot on the right size burner can save you up to \$36 annually for an electric range, and \$18 on a natural gas range.

For more cooking efficiency tips, look online. There you will find ways to use your microwave to reheat leftovers rather than reheating on the stove or possibly test the benefits of a new style pressure cooker for energy savings.

Equipment Rebates and Incentives

Some electric and natural gas utilities offer rebates and incentives for customers making energy efficiency upgrades to their home or business. It could pay to find out what your energy provider offers.

Tax Credits

Find out how the new stimulus funding has affected Federal Tax Credits for Energy Efficiency at www.energystar.gov

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