

# Oven meals aid energy conscious homemakers

By SALLY BAIR  
Feature Writer

LEBANON - With the approach of colder weather, energy conservation is on everyone's mind. Homemakers may face the biggest challenge of all as they try to be energy conscious in their work throughout the home.

Mrs. Alletta Schadler, Lebanon County home economist, suggests that one excellent way to conserve energy is to always have the oven filled when preparing food in the oven. Talking to a group of homemakers this week she said, "When you heat up the oven to use it,

really use it. It is a lot more economical to do everything in the oven than to do one thing in the oven and have three burners going. Once the oven is heated it doesn't cost that much to operate it." She said that once preheated, an oven is on only about 25 per cent of the time.

Letie advised, "You can put together many things in an oven you may not have thought possible. Most foods are not as sensitive as you think they are."

She said there are a few things - very few - which cannot be put into an oven with a variety of other food items. A delicate cake, for

instance, should be baked alone because texture is important. If there are extras in the oven, a delicate cake might get more moisture than it should and the oven door will probably be opened more often than is good for the cake.

Her advice to the homemakers was to choose carefully, but not to be afraid to combine elements of a whole meal. The meal she prepared for the group included a meat loaf, a nut bread, and acorn squash all done in the same oven - successfully.

Letie said that 350 degrees F. is the temperature at which most meats, vegetables, and fruit dessert will do best. She said this can be varied to 325 degrees if you need to slow up a meal or to 375 degrees to speed up the process.

Many things will help to determine the question of

how long such a complete oven meal will take. Letie says the size of the pieces being baked is the biggest determinant, and one which can be controlled by the homemaker. Obviously, thick slices of carrots and large meat loaves will take longer than shredded vegetables or individual meat loaves.

The temperature at the start of the cooking process will also affect the time, along with the cooking utensil material and its shape. For instance, Letie reminded the group that a shiny pan will reflect heat, and, therefore, take a little longer to cook. She encouraged the women to use whichever size utensils suits the meal and to change the temperature accordingly.

Letie also said that aluminum foil can be used as a cooking utensil, and that it is especially successful with

frozen vegetables. When enclosed in aluminum foil with a small amount of water, they will cook very well in the oven with other food items.

If all items are thoroughly chilled before going into the oven, the cooking time will be a little longer.

In an electric oven, Letie said that frozen foods can be safely left for eight hours before the automatic oven comes on. However, she cautioned the homemakers against putting warm food in an oven and allowing it to set for several hours before the oven comes on. Likewise, the pilot light in a gas oven produces enough heat that frozen foods cannot be left safely for a long period of time before the oven comes on.

Other interesting tidbits Letie passed along included how to prepare potatoes for baking. She said potatoes

can be combined successfully with a larger oven meal and can be prepared in advance with no darkening if they are peeled and dipped in water to which some lemon juice has been added.

She also noted that a blue agate roasting pan can be used to make an excellent pot roast without any pre-browning of the meat on the top of the range. She said the raw meat and a small amount of water roasted for one hour per pound will yield a beautiful roast and nice brown drippings for gravy.

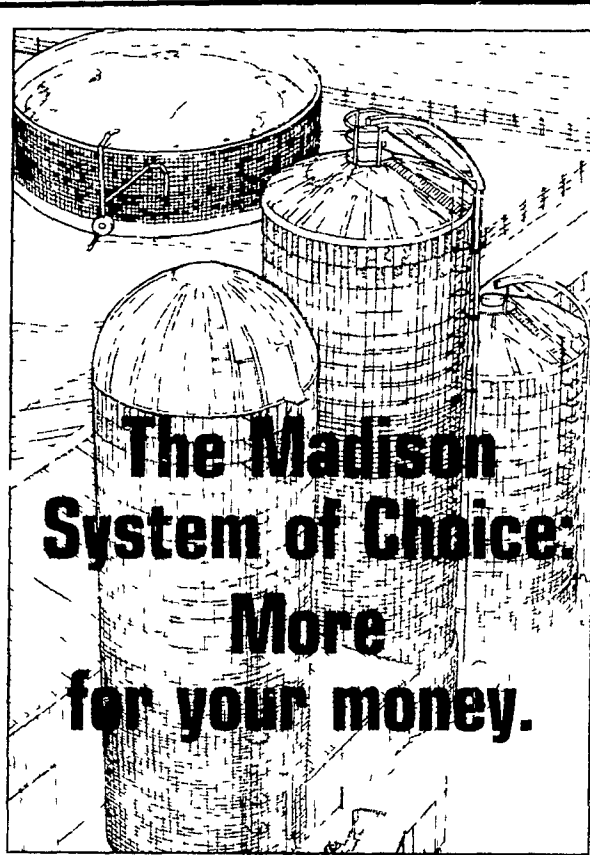
If you've been heating your oven just to bake one or two potatoes, Leties says you are wasting a lot of energy. She suggests using, instead, an electric frying pan or a crock pot to do the job. If using an electric frying pan, fold heavy duty aluminum foil on the bottom of the pan to keep the potatoes from sticking, then just cook. She said the type of potato and the amount of moisture in the potato will affect the cooking time, but potatoes can be done in a frying pan in 1-1/2 hours.

She suggested that women try all of the small appliances they now have in the kitchen which may not receive much use. "There are a lot of things which can be done with the appliances we already have," Letie added that if a utensil or appliance doesn't suit your needs, it's probably wisest to dispose of it.

Slow cookers and pressure cookers are both energy savers, Letie explained, and in terms of the current used, they probably consume about the same amount.

She encouraged the women to find out how much energy their oven and other appliances are using by checking the kilowatt rating on the item and clocking the actual time the indicator light is on. In this way, homemakers can figure out which appliance is the most efficient for the job to be done.

In conserving energy, Letie said, "Use as few sources of energy as possible. Any piece of equipment which is thermostatically controlled is more efficient than one which heats constantly."

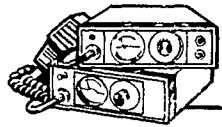


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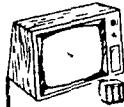
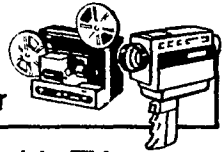
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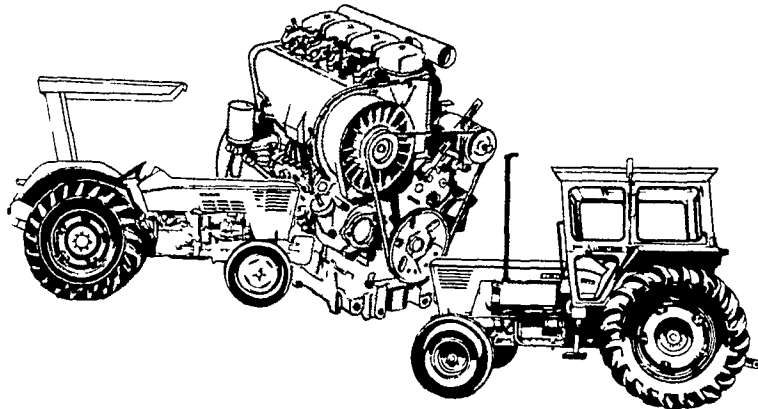
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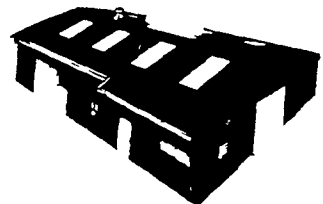
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